

The two steps I encourage you to take are these: Become informed, and ask questions about what you're buying—whether it's shoes, a t-shirt, or any other type of apparel.

To be informed, go to websites such as [fairtradeusa.org](http://fairtradeusa.org), [thirdworldtraveler.com](http://thirdworldtraveler.com), and [tenthousandvillages.com](http://tenthousandvillages.com), which list and sell products from clothing manufacturers who have worked to meet the Fair Trade conditions. This list grows monthly, and by supporting these companies through your purchases, you can become a socially conscious consumer.

Additionally, ask questions of other retailers. Whether you shop online or at local retail stores, ask direct questions before purchasing clothes—for example: Where are your products made? Do you have proof of Fair Trade practices? Where can I find this information before I make my purchase? Such questions define the socially conscious consumer, and they ensure that you will not be directly contributing to unsafe and unfair labor practices.

Although several factors contributed to the tragedy in Bangladesh, there is one clear way to help prevent future disasters: Become a socially conscious consumer. By being informed and asking questions, you, too, can make a difference in the lives of workers around the world.

**Step 5** of Monroe's motivated sequence—the **action** step—is a direct request of listeners (“call to action”) to act on the speaker's suggestions and concrete directions for doing so.

Jacob concludes by reinforcing his call to action and leaves the audience with a new perspective to consider.

## CHAPTER 25 ●●●●

# Speaking on Special Occasions

Special occasions stand out from the ordinary rhythm of life, marking passages, celebrating life's highlights, and commemorating events. Such occasions often feature the observance of important ceremonies and rituals as well as speeches.

## 🔍 Functions of Special Occasion Speeches

A **special occasion speech** is one that is prepared for a specific occasion and for a purpose dictated by that occasion. Awards ceremonies call for remarks that acknowledge

accomplishments, for example, and acceptance speeches that display gratitude. Special occasion speeches can be either informative or persuasive or, often, a mix of both. However, neither of these functions is the main goal; the underlying function of a special occasion speech is to *entertain, celebrate, commemorate, inspire, or set a social agenda*:

- In speeches that *entertain*, listeners expect a lighthearted, amusing speech; they may also expect the speaker to offer a certain degree of insight into the topic at hand. Venues such as banquets, awards dinners, and roasts frequently feature speakers whose main purpose is to entertain.
- In speeches that *celebrate* a person, a place, or an event, listeners look to the speaker to praise the subject of the celebration; they also anticipate a degree of ceremony in accordance with the norms of the occasion. Weddings, anniversaries, retirement parties, and awards ceremonies call for speeches that celebrate.
- In speeches that *commemorate* an event or a person (at dedications of memorials or at gatherings held in someone's honor), listeners expect the speaker to offer remembrance and tribute.
- In speeches that *inspire* (including inaugural addresses, keynote speeches, and commencement speeches), listeners expect to be motivated by examples of achievement and heroism.
- In speeches that *set social agendas* (such as occur at gatherings of cause-oriented organizations, fund-raisers, campaign banquets, conferences, and conventions), listeners expect the articulation and reinforcement of the goals and values of the group.

## Types of Special Occasion Speeches

Special occasion speeches include (but are not limited to) introductions, speeches of acceptance, award presentations, roasts and toasts, eulogies and other speeches of tribute, after-dinner speeches, and speeches of inspiration.

### Speeches of Introduction

A **speech of introduction** is a short speech with two goals: to prepare or “warm up” the audience for the speaker and to motivate audience members to listen to what the main speaker has to say. A good speech of introduction balances four elements: the speaker's background, the subject of the speaker's message, the occasion, and the audience.

- *Describe the speaker's background and qualifications for speaking.* Relate something about the speaker's achievements, offices held, and other facts to demonstrate why the speaker is relevant to the occasion. The object is to heighten audience interest and build the speaker's credibility.
- *Briefly preview the speaker's topic.* Give the audience a sense of why the subject is of interest, bearing in mind that it is not the introducer's job to evaluate the speech. The rule is: Get in and out quickly with a few well-chosen remarks.
- *Ask the audience to welcome the speaker.* This can be done simply by saying something like "Please welcome Cesar Cruz."
- *Be brief.* Speak just long enough to accomplish the goals of preparation and motivation. One well-known speaker recommends a two-minute maximum.<sup>1</sup>



## CHECKLIST

### Guidelines for Introducing Other Speakers

- Identify the speaker correctly. Assign him or her the proper title, such as "vice president for public relations" or "professor emeritus."
- Practice a difficult-to-pronounce name beforehand.
- Contact the speaker ahead of time to verify any facts about him or her that you plan to cite.

## Speeches of Acceptance

A **speech of acceptance** is made in response to receiving an award. Its purpose is to express gratitude for the honor bestowed on the speaker. The speech should reflect that gratitude.

- *Prepare in advance.* If you know or even suspect that you are to receive an award, decide before the event what you will say.
- *Express what the award means to you.* Convey to the audience the value you place on the award. Express yourself genuinely and with humility.
- *Express gratitude.* Thank by name each of the relevant persons or organizations involved in giving you the award. Acknowledge any team players or others who helped you attain the achievement for which you are being honored.

## QUICK TIP

### Respond to the Introduction

Whenever you are introduced by another speaker, acknowledge and thank him or her for the introduction. Common methods of responding include “I appreciate those kind words” and “Thank you for making me feel welcome.” Accept praise with humility and perhaps even with humor: “Your description was so gracious that I did not realize you were speaking about me.”

## Speeches of Presentation

The goal of the **speech of presentation** is twofold: to communicate the meaning of the award and to explain why the recipient is receiving it.

- *Convey the meaning of the award.* Describe what the award is for and what it represents. Mention the sponsors and describe the link between the sponsors’ goals and values and the award.
- *Explain why the recipient is receiving the award.* Describe the recipient’s achievements and special attributes that qualify him or her as deserving of the award.

## Roasts and Toasts

A **roast** is a humorous tribute to a person, one in which a series of speakers jokingly poke fun at him or her. A **toast** is a brief tribute to a person or an event being celebrated. Both roasts and toasts call for short speeches whose goal is to celebrate an individual and his or her achievements.

- *Prepare.* Impromptu though they might appear, the best roasts and toasts reflect time spent drafting and, importantly, rehearsing. As you practice, time the speech.
- *Highlight remarkable traits of the person being honored.* Restrict your remarks to one or two of the person’s most unusual or recognizable attributes. Convey the qualities that have made him or her worthy of celebrating.
- *Be positive and be brief.* Even if the speech is poking fun at someone, as in a roast, keep the tone positive. Remember, your overall purpose is to pay tribute to the honoree. For example, at the 2015 annual White House Correspondents’ Dinner roast, Saturday Night Live cast member Cecily Strong struck the right balance of humor and social satire when she joked to then-President Barack Obama: “Your hair is so white now, it can talk back to the police.”<sup>2</sup>

## Eulogies and Other Tributes

The word **eulogy** derives from the Greek word meaning “to praise.” Those delivering eulogies, usually close friends or family members of the deceased, are charged with celebrating and commemorating the life of someone while consoling those who have been left behind.

- *Balance delivery and emotions.* The audience looks to the speaker for guidance in dealing with the loss and for a sense of closure, so stay in control. If you do feel that you are about to break down, pause, take a breath, and focus on your next thought.
- *Refer to the family of the deceased.* Families suffer the greatest loss, and a funeral is primarily for their benefit. Show respect for the family, mentioning each member by name.
- *Be positive but realistic.* Emphasize the deceased’s positive qualities while avoiding excessive praise.

### QUICK TIP

#### Commemorate Life—Not Death

A eulogy should pay tribute to the deceased as an individual and remind the audience that he or she is still alive, in a sense, in our memories. Rather than focus on the circumstances of death, focus on the life of the person. Talk about the person’s contributions and achievements, and demonstrate the person’s character. Consider telling an anecdote that illustrates the type of person you are eulogizing. Even humorous anecdotes may be appropriate if they effectively humanize the deceased.

## After-Dinner Speeches

Its name notwithstanding, the contemporary **after-dinner speech** is just as likely to occur before, during, or after a lunch seminar or other type of business, professional, or civic meeting as it is to follow a formal dinner. In general, an after-dinner speech is expected to be lighthearted and entertaining. At the same time, listeners expect to gain insight into the topic at hand and/or to hear an outline of priorities and goals for the group. Thus social agenda-setting is a simultaneous goal of many after-dinner speeches.

- *Recognize the occasion.* Connect the speech with the occasion. Delivering remarks unrelated to the event may leave

the impression that it is a **canned speech**—that is, one that the speaker uses again and again in different settings.

- *Balance seriousness with lightheartedness.* Even when charged with addressing a serious topic, the after-dinner speaker should make an effort to keep his or her remarks low-key enough to accompany the digestion of a meal.
- *Avoid stand-up comedy.* Many speakers treat the after-dinner speech as an opportunity to string together a series of jokes only loosely centered on a theme. However, the after-dinner speech is still a speech. If you are naturally very funny, use that skill, but in the context of a speech.

### Speeches of Inspiration

While many special occasion speeches may well be inspiring, a **speech of inspiration** deliberately seeks to uplift members of the audience and to help them see things in a positive light. Sermons, commencement addresses, “pep talks,” and nomination speeches are all inspirational in nature. Effective speeches of inspiration touch on deep feelings in the audience. Through emotional force, they urge us toward purer motives and harder effort and remind us of a common good.

- *Appeal to audience members’ emotions (pathos).* Three means of evoking emotion are touching upon shared values, using vivid imagery, and telling stories (see p. 173). Techniques of language, such as repetition, alliteration, and parallelism can also help transport the audience from the mundane to a loftier level (see Chapter 15).
- *Use real-life stories.* Few things move us as much as the ordinary person who achieves the extraordinary, whose struggles result in triumph over adversity and the realization of a dream. Recognizing this, many U.S. presidents have taken to weaving stories about “ordinary American heroes” into their State of the Union addresses.
- *Be dynamic.* If it fits your personality, use a dynamic speaking style to inspire through delivery. Combining an energetic style with a powerful message can be one of the most successful strategies for inspirational speaking.
- *Make your goal clear.* Inspirational speeches run the risk of being vague, leaving the audience unsure what the message was. Whatever you are trying to motivate your listeners to do, let them know.
- *Close with a dramatic ending.* Use a dramatic ending to inspire your audience to feel or act. Recall from Chapter 14 the various methods of concluding a speech, including a quotation, story, or call to action.

## SAMPLE SPECIAL OCCASION SPEECH

*Following is a commencement speech delivered by actor and comedian Will Ferrell at his alma mater, the University of Southern California. Ferrell weaves real-life anecdotes into his speech and uses self-deprecating humor to build common ground with the new graduates. As he shares his hard-won life lessons, he focuses on uplifting audience members and arousing their better instincts, and he ends with a uniquely memorable conclusion—all key components of a speech of inspiration.*

### 2017 University of Southern California Commencement Address

**Will Ferrell**

It is such an honor to deliver this year's commencement address to the University of Southern California's graduating class of 2017...

I graduated [from USC] in 1990 with a degree in Sports Information. Yes. You heard me, Sports Information. A program so difficult, so arduous, that they discontinued the major eight years after I left.

Those of us with Sports Information degrees are an elite group. We are like the Navy Seals of USC graduates. There are very few of us and there was a high dropout rate.

So I graduate and I immediately get a job right out of college working for ESPN, right? Wrong. No, I moved right back home. Back home to the mean streets of Irvine, California... Pretty great success story, right? Yeah, I moved back home for a solid two years, I might add. And I was lucky, actually. Lucky that I had a very supportive and understanding mother. And she recognized that while I had an interest in pursuing sportscasting, my gut was telling me that I really wanted to pursue something else. And that something else was comedy.

For you see, the seeds for this journey were planted right here on this campus. This campus was a theater or testing lab, if you will. I was always trying to make my friends laugh whenever I could find a moment. I had a work-study job at the humanities audiovisual department that would allow me to take

Humor can easily backfire, but Ferrell uses it effectively here and throughout his speech. His self-deprecating humor creates easy bonds of identification between himself and the graduates.

off from time to time. By *allow me*, I mean I would just leave and they didn't notice. So I would literally leave my job if I knew friends were attending class close by and crash a lecture while in character. My good buddy Emil, who's also here today... told me one day that I should crash his Thematic Options literature class. So I cobbled together a janitor's

Ferrell paints a vivid picture with these specific, concrete details, allowing the audience to easily visualize the scene.

outfit complete with work gloves, safety goggles, a dangling lit cigarette, and a bucket full of cleaning supplies. And then I proceeded

to walk into the class, interrupting the lecture, informing the professor that I'd just been sent from Physical Plant to clean up a student's vomit. True story.

What Emil neglected to tell me was that the professor of his class was Ronald Gottesman, a professor who co-edited the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Needless to say, a big-time guy. A month after visiting my friend's class as a janitor, I was walking through the campus when someone grabbed me by the shoulder and it was Ron Gottesman. I thought for sure he was going to tell me to never do that again. Instead what he told me was that he loved my barging in on his class and that he thought it was one of the funniest things he'd ever seen and would I please do it again? So on invitation from Professor Gottesman, I would barge in on his lecture class from time to time as the guy from Physical Plant coming by to check on things, and the professor would joyfully play along.

One time I got my hands on a power drill and I just stood outside the classroom door operating the drill for a good minute. Unbeknownst to me, Professor Gottesman was wondering aloud to his class, "I wonder if we're about to get a visit from our Physical Plant guy?" I then walked in as if on cue and the whole class erupted in laughter. After leaving, Professor Gottesman then weaved the surprise visit into his lecture on Walt Whitman and *Leaves of Grass*. Moments like these encouraged me to think maybe I was funny to whole groups of people who didn't know me, and this wonderful professor had no idea how his encouragement of me—to come and interrupt his class no less—was enough to give myself permission to be silly and weird.



My senior year I would discover a comedy and improv troupe called the Groundlings located on Melrose Avenue. This was the theater company and school that gave the starts to Laraine Newman, Phil Hartman, John Lovitz, Pee-wee Herman, Conan O'Brien, and Lisa Kudrow, to name a few. Later it would become my home where I would meet the likes of Chris Kattan, Cheri O'Teri, Ana Gasteyer, Chris Parnell, Maya Rudolph, Will Forte, and Kristin Wiig. I went to one of their shows during the spring semester of my senior year and in fact got pulled up onstage during an audience participation sketch. I was so afraid and awestruck at what the actors were doing that I didn't utter a word. And even in this moment of abject fear and total failure I found it to be thrilling to be on that stage. I then knew I wanted to be a comedic actor.

Ferrell's storytelling includes important points of identification with his audience, who are also discovering what they want to become.

So starting in the fall of 1991, for the next three and a half years I was taking classes and performing in various shows at the Groundlings and around Los Angeles. I was even trying my hand at stand-up comedy. Not great stand-up, mind you, but enough material to get myself up in front of strangers... My stand-up act was based mostly on material derived from watching old episodes of *Star Trek*. My opening joke was to sing the opening theme to *Star Trek*. Not even funny, just weird.

But I didn't care. I was just trying to throw as many darts at the dartboard, hoping that one would eventually stick. Now don't get me wrong, I wasn't extremely confident that I would succeed during this time period, and after moving back to LA there was many a night where in my LA apartment, I would sit down to a meal of spaghetti topped with mustard, with only \$20 in my checking account and I would think to myself, "Oh well, I can always be a substitute schoolteacher." And yes, I was afraid. You're never not afraid. I'm still afraid. I was afraid to write this speech. And now, I'm just realizing how many people are watching me right now, and it's scary. Can you please look away while I deliver the rest of the speech?

But my fear of failure never approached in magnitude my fear of what if. What if I never tried at all?

Everyone has speech anxiety, even famous comedians. Here again Ferrell creates identification with his audience.

By the spring of 1995 producers from *Saturday Night Live* had come to see the current show at the Groundlings. After two harrowing auditions and two meetings with executive producer Lorne Michaels, which all took place over the course of six weeks, I got the word I was hired to the cast of *Saturday Night Live* for the '95-'96 season.

I couldn't believe it. And even though I went on to enjoy seven seasons on the show, it was rocky beginning for me. After my first show, one reviewer referred to me as "the most annoying newcomer of the new cast." Someone showed this to me and I promptly put it up on the wall in my office, reminding myself that to some people I will be annoying. Some people will not think I'm funny, and that that's okay. One woman wrote to me and said she hated my portrayal of George W. Bush. It was mean-spirited, not funny and besides you have a fat face. I wrote her back and I said, I appreciate your letter and she was entitled to her opinion, but that my job as a comedian especially on a show like *Saturday Night Live* was to hold up a mirror to our political leaders and engage from time to time in satirical reflection. As for my fat face, you are 100% right. I'm trying to work on that. Please don't hesitate to write me again if you feel like I've lost some weight in my face...

Even as I left *SNL*, none of the studios were willing to take a chance on me as a comedy star. It took us three years of shopping *Anchorman* around before anyone would make it. When I left *SNL*, all I really had was a movie called *Old School* that wouldn't be released for another year, and a subpar script that needed a huge rewrite about a man raised by elves at the North Pole.

Now one may look at me as having great success, which I have in the strictest sense of the word, and don't get me wrong: I love what I do and I feel so fortunate to get to entertain people. But to me, my definition of success is my sixteen-and-a-half-year marriage to my beautiful and talented wife, Vivica. Success are my three amazing sons, Magnus, 13, Matthias, 10, and Axel, age 7. Right there, stand up guys, take a bow, there you go.

Success to me is my involvement in the charity Cancer for College, which gives college scholarships to cancer survivors, started by my great friend and SC alum Craig Pollard, a two-time cancer survivor himself,

who thought of the charity while we were fraternity brothers at the Delt house, up on West Adams...

No matter how cliché it may sound, you will never truly be successful until you learn to give beyond yourself. Empathy and kindness are the true signs of emotional intelligence, and that's what Viv and I try to teach our boys. Hey Matthias, get your hands off Axel right now! Stop it. I can see you. Okay? Dr. Ferrell's watching you.

A speech of inspiration urges the audience toward purer motives, as Ferrell does here with his emphasis on the values of love of family and generosity of spirit.

To those of you graduates sitting out there who have a pretty good idea of what you'd like to do with your life, congratulations. For many of you who maybe don't have it all figured out, it's okay. That's the same chair that I sat in. Enjoy the process of your search without succumbing to the pressure of the result. Trust your gut, keep throwing darts at the dartboard. Don't listen to the critics and you will figure it out.

Class of 2017, I just want you to know you will never be alone on whatever path you may choose. If you do have a moment where you feel a little down just think of the support you have from this great Trojan family and imagine me, literally picture my face, singing this song gently into your ear:

"If I should stay, I would only be in your way. So I'll go, but I know, I'll think of you every step of the way. And I will always love you, will always love you, will always love you, Class of 2017. And I will always love you."

Who but Will Ferrell would end a speech by breaking into song? This conclusion is sure to create a lasting impression on his audience.

Thank you. Fight on!