



PUBLIC SPEAKING

CONTEST

Public speaking is a fun competition that builds confidence in our youth! No matter your job, you must be able to communicate your thoughts to groups! Extension staff aim to help every member each year develop and deliver one speech to a group each year!

Due Nov 20, 2025

Our Guide to Winning Or Succeeding in the Contest:

Topic: You can write your speech on any topic you know about, enjoy doing, or know a LOT about. Choose something that you like talking about or something you have experienced. It is best to pick something you are interested in. **Topics should be about things that bring people together, NOT divide people. Topics are to be informative, persuasive, or entertaining. They are NOT to be a "how to" speech.** Below are ideas that are age-appropriate and are crowd pleasers:

- a. **4th and 5th grade:** Our most successful speakers have talked about respect, caring, trustworthiness, responsibility, courage, cooperation, perseverance, citizenship, and fairness. They make it enjoyable by using examples from their own lives. Make it fun by speaking from the heart!
- b. **6th-8th Grade:** Your speeches will be longer. Topics include leaders of tomorrow, perseverance, the world as our community, serving others, someone you admire, the power of youth, or a 4-H project. A great speech connects your topic to life skills and your own personal experience. *If you like the competition of public speaking and want to earn more awards through 4-H, this is the time to start trying to add 4-H.*
- c. **9th-12th Grade:** The scorecard states you must relate your speech back to 4-H. If you compete past the county, you will have to do an extemporaneous speech.

Research: Take some time to brainstorm. If you research, tell the audience where you got the information from. If you do not tell where you got information from, this is called **plagiarism**. Examples of how to avoid **plagiarism**:

- a. "According to my mother, a certified nurse,...."
- b. "Our counselor, [Name], taught us...."
- c. "The book, [title of book] by [author], says,"
- d. "The website, [website name or url] states..."

When you use the options above, you are citing a source. Sources deserve credit.

Google/Bing/Yahoo are not sources: they are search engines. Wikipedia is not a reliable source as anyone can change the information.



Time Limit: Time limits get longer the older you get. **In the classroom or club meeting , your speech needs to be about 2 minutes.** 1 Point deducted for every 30 seconds over. 5 points for every 30 seconds under. Your teacher is allowed to change the amount of time depending on class size. At the **county** contest and beyond, your time limits are:

- **4th grade:** 1-3 minutes
- **5th-8th Grade:** 2-7 minutes
- **9th-12th Grade:** 3-7 minutes.

Organize: Your speech should have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Like a hamburger, it has these layers to make it very appetizing to the listener. FOLLOWING OUR ORGANIZATION METHOD IS THE BEST WAY TO BE ABLE TO REMEMBER WHAT YOU WILL SAY. Think about how you will organize your speech, write your speech, reorganize your speech so it makes sense, and re-write your speech again.

- **Introduction:** Get your audience's attention with a hook/attention grabber that introduces your topic. After that, give them a minimum of a one-sentence overview of what you will talk about in your speech. Examples of hooks include a quote or fact, verses of a poem or song, a joke, or a rhetorical question.
 - The last sentence of your introduction will state the main points, the ideas that support your topic, or the number of ideas or points you have. This should support the message of your speech in one sentence.
- **Body of your speech:** Tell the audience what you want them to know using three main points. Don't give them long facts or wordy information. In each layer of the speech you will have
 - A transition word, phrase, or sentence that helps the listener where you are going next.
 - Support the point of the layer by having examples, personal stories, numbers, or facts. If it is a fact, for every fact, there should be multiple personal sentences that help the listener understand why you brought it up.
- **Conclusion:** This is also called a summary. Tell them what the main ideas were, why you talked about it, and give them a message of what you wanted them to take away from it. Do you want them to go off and make a change? Do you want them to reflect on their own life? Make it catchy: encourage, challenge, and inspire!

DO NOT DO IT:

DO NOT START YOUR 4-H SPEECH IMMEDIATELY WITH, OR ANY VARIATION OF, "HELLO, MY NAME NAME IS [BLANK] AND I WILL TALK ABOUT [BLANK]." This is NOT a creative way to start your speech as we discussed.

DO NOT DO A HOW-TO SPEECH. This means **no props nor visual presentations.**



Note Cards: After you practice, write down the most important information on a notecard if needed. No one can see your notecards while you are giving your speech. That means no one will know if you skipped part of what you wanted to say if you had a spelling error or anything like that! 3x5 inch note cards are allowed but **no more** than 7.

Score Cards: Writing your speech is only part of it. Being well dressed, speaking with emotion, speaking loudly, and being prepared all matter!

4th-8th grade: tiny.utk.edu/45678

High School: tiny.utk.edu/hs

- **Voice:** Speak up. Don't shout. Use a clear voice. Speak at a slower pace. Annunciate each word, while sounding as calm and natural as possible.
- **Eye Contact:** Look at the audience throughout the speech. Plan where you may look and where your friends are.
- **Posture:** Stand tall. Hold your cards at chest height, not in your face. If you walk, plan it. Walking is typically not recommended unless you are older and have your speech memorized.
- **Expression:** Hand gestures are allowed if it is natural to you. Don't play with your cards. Smile or make sure your emotions match your topic.
- **Avoid the filler words:** Practicing helps you avoid this!
- **Practice:** The only way to get good is to practice and to try. Practice in front of friends, family, classmates, your pets, the mirror, a neighbor, your church group, or whomever you like. The more you practice, the more likely you are to feel good at the end, gain confidence, and if wanting to be competitive: WIN! This is a small safe space to get good at public speaking so you are less afraid when you go into the real world and know what you need to prepare!

While this might be a grade in class, the sponsors are 4-H agents, volunteers, and the program's donors. While not required, relate your speech to 4-H to be more likely to place by all judges. We will pick members from home school at the next meeting to represent home school 4-H at the county. You will only compete against your grade.

ABSOLUTELY NO PROPS, POWERPOINT, SLIDES, OR ASSISTANCE FROM ANYONE AT ANY TIME. This contest is just about you and your ability to deliver a speech. Just speak loud and confidently. **You are NOT allowed to have help when delivering your speech and cannot ask for audience participation.**

Alyssa Anderson
aande159@utk.edu

Nicole Bettencourt
Nmarrero@utk.edu

Website: overton.tennessee.edu
Social Media:
Facebook and Instagram
[@oc4htn](https://www.facebook.com/oc4htn)

UT/TSU Extension Overton
312 W. Broad St, STE 6
Livingston, TN 38570
Monday-Friday
7:30-4:00 PM

Office:
931-823-2735
Fax:
931-823-6286



HAMBURGER PLAN

Name: _____ Due Date: _____

Potential Speech Topic: _____

This is to help you brainstorm and is not meant to be your final speech. When you have your ideas down, return to your teacher or a trusted adult and ask for their advice.

Introduction:

My Hook: _____

My main idea statement (Thesis): _____

1st Main Point:
(Transition, Evidence)

2nd Main Point:
(Transition, Evidence)

3rd Main Point:
(Transition, Evidence)

Conclusion:

Restate my main ideas:

Relate back to my hook: _____

My Take Home Message: _____

