

# HOW TO WIN THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP of Public Speaking 2012 International Speech Contest - by Jeremy Donovan

Here is a summary of Jeremy Donovan's 51 tips. Follow these to make your speech a winner! – Khushi Pasquale

## I. Taking the Stage

**Tip#1: Craft a memorable title that triggers insatiable curiosity**

- best are titles that prompt the listener to ask „why“
- next best are titles that lead to „how“
- maxims and imperatives work well
- e.g. *Never Too Late; It's Possible; Speak!; Get Up!*

**Tip#2: Make your title as short as possible (see also Tip#26)**

- 6 words or less (e.g. „OUCH“ by Darren LaCroix)

**Tip#3: Speaking order does not matter, your speech matters**

- there is no statistical basis for a speaking order bias
- „Speaking order does not belong in your mind – you have no control over it and it does not matter.“

**Tip#4: Take the stage with confidence bridging the audience's energy to the tone of your content**

- Everything counts! Hold your head up; smile; walk with a smooth pace; match your pace to your content

## II. Topic Selection

**Tip#5: Choose a single, inspirational core theme rooted in an eternal truth**

- "... the International Speech contest calls for a 7 minute secular sermon centered on reminding the audience about an eternal truth or virtue."
- e.g. Love; Happiness, Mindfulness, Hope, Tolerance, ...

**Tip#6: Limit overly technical subject matter**

- use an accessible visual metaphor (blood clot = traffic jam)
- transform statistics from logical to emotional

## III. Storytelling

**Tip#7: Relive your epiphany**

- reliving a personal epiphany/turning point is the best way to tell an inspirational story

**Tip#8: Grab attention, reveal your theme, & preview your structure in the opening**

- tease them with what you are going to tell them

**Tip#9: Open with a personal story, a compelling question, or a shocking statement**

- builds an emotional connection
- option: use someone else's story
- shocking statements are most often statistics
- quotes are no longer considered a sophisticated approach

#### Tip#10: Make your transitions crystal clear

- use a pause or move to a different part of the stage
- use language that indicates a change
- shift vocal delivery

#### Tip#11: Build a logical narrative structure by choosing the variety and progression of stories

- Three Act Story: background introduction; incident that starts the journey; climax and resolution
- Pixar Pitch: „Once upon a time ... and every day ... Until one day ...“; „And because of that ... And because of that... and ... Until finally ...“ ; „And since that day ... And the moral is ...“

#### Tip#12: Create archetypal characters, including a protagonist, a mentor, and an opponent

- heroes & villains add emotional impact and save time
- introduce hero (self?) early – reveal strengths, desires, flaws, vulnerability
- include others who help you through your struggle
- persevere with a special process, gained through a mentor; pass the process on to us.
- Mentors can be family, friends, historic figures, even objects that teach us
- Villains can be intangible evils (Fear, Intolerance, Greed)

#### Tip#13: Bring your characters to life with dialogue, physical presence, voice

- match voice and physicality to the character

#### Tip#14: Bring your audience into your setting

- Use SPECIFICS; not „years ago“ but „It was 2010 ...“
- Give sensory description – *legs shaking, hands sweating*
- Provide atmosphere – *hot, sultry summer; brisk winter*

#### Tip#15: Choose messages with universal audience appeal

- appeal to both men and women
- be mindful of a diverse audience – appeal to all

### IV. Humor & Emotional Range

#### Tip#16: Get the first laugh fast

- even in tragedy we begin the process of healing through laughter – it offers release
- the speaker's purpose is to inspire and entertain „Inspiration stirs deep emotions and humor is the sugar that helps the medicine go down.“
- Example from Brett Rutledge (1998) „*I was the kind of kid your parents told you to not play with.*“

#### Tip#17: Crank up the laughs per minute with superiority, surprise, and release

- World Champions average 2.5 laughs per minute

#### Tip#18: Remember to riff

- tell laugh lines in clusters of 2 or 3 to maximize impact

**Tip#19: Amplify humor with vocal, physical & facial expressiveness**

- laughter needs silence - pause
- exaggerated vocal variety, physicality, and facial expressions act as catalysts to ignite laughter

**Tip#20: All humor should further the message**

- recycled jokes from comedians rarely further the message or sound authentic

**Tip#21: Pause and stay in character while the audience is laughing**

- or move to a new stage location while audience laughs

**Tip#22: Bring your audience through the broadest possible emotional range**

- most winning speeches include instances of anger, disgust, fear, happiness, love, and sadness

**Tip#23: Express your emotions, but don't lose control**

- „Watching a TM contest can sometimes be a bit like watching a Shakespearian tragedy; there are countless stories of losing loved ones to incurable illness, accident or simply old age. ... However, sob stories rarely win.“

**V. Language**

**Tip#24: Use the smallest and simplest possible words to express your message**

- simple language, short sentences, and pauses = deep, rich, meaningful, journey together with your audience

**Tip#25: Intensify your language with vivid images and sensory detail**

- be simple, concrete, emotional
- use adjectives and adverbs (e.g. *incredible; unbelievably good*)

**Tip#26: Encapsulate your core message in a catchphrase and drill it**

- International Contest is **not** a place for subtlety
- Use catchphrase at least once in introduction, body, conclusion
- When you use catchphrase as your title it:
  - forces you to stay on message
  - announces core message with no ambiguity;
  - judges can look at your title and recall your speech

**Tip#27: Use a callback to link your conclusion to your introduction**

- at the end, repeat words or phrases used at the start

**Tip#28: Use figurative language to personify your opponent**

- opponent is often a concept (fear, hate, quitting)
- e.g. you might personify fear as a huge shadow

**Tip#29: Polish your speech with rhetorical wordplay**

- similar sounds – e.g. *seconds of silence*
- repetition – e.g. *every move I made, every step I took*
- 3 words for 1 concept: *party = wine, women, and song*

**Tip#30: Apply rule of 3 in lists of similar items**

- Jock Elliot: „Family, Friends, Partners“

- Single items are definitive and powerful
- Pairs give contrast
- Threes emphasize relationship, similarity

**Tip#31: Avoid quoting famous people**

- unless it is a novel quote or directly connects to your audience
- we want to hear you/your ideas

**Tip#32: Surprise your audience with misdirection**

**Tip#33: The larger the audience, the shorter the speech**

- allow for audience reaction time
- 5-7 min. speech means a word count of 600-700

## VI. Verbal Delivery

**Tip#34: Exploit the many-faceted power of the pause**

- dramatic pause – at opening use eye contact to increase audience attention level
- in body, give audience time to savor your message
- comprehension pause – audience processes message
- humorous pause – allow laughter; add facial gesture
- transitional pause – typically longer, allows speaker to move to a new location or new section of speech
- filler pause – alternative to ums & ahs – as natural breaks in phrases and sentences

**Tip#35: Add vocal variety by varying your speed, volume, pitch**

- key to holding audience interest is contrast
- apply to phrases, sentences, passages, individual words

**Tip#36: Eliminate all filler words**

- remove linking words - unnecessary „and“ „but“ „so“
- new shorter sentence often has more impact

**Tip#37: Sing if it suits you**

- contestants have sung and often to good effect

## VII. Non-Verbal Delivery

**Tip#39: Dress for success**

- dress slightly better than your audience
- get rid of anything that might hamper your physical activity, fall off, jingle or distract your audience
- be especially careful of jewelry when wearing a microphone

**Tip#40: The context determines the costume**

- theatricality is ok, but costume must fit the context and further the speech

**Tip#41: Gesture naturally and frequently to reinforce your words**

- find a neutral, base position that is comfortable
- use larger gestures for larger audiences
- gesture above the waist and below the neck
- stay within your personality range – if you are not naturally theatrical, stay reserved

**Tip#42: Maintain 3 seconds of eye contact with individuals in a random pattern**

- focus on one eye, not both eyes to avoid stare
- hold till you reach the end of a phrase or sentence
- coordinate shifts in eye contact with comprehension pauses
- eye contact creates emotional bond; for intimacy, move toward that person

**Tip#43: Match your facial expressions to the mood of your content at each moment of your speech**

- keep it natural, consistent with content
- amplify facial expressions for larger audiences

**Tip#44: Give props deeper meaning and hide them when not in use**

- literal uses of props are less powerful than metaphorical ones (e.g. a chair can be a car, a rock, a person)

**Tip#45: Move within the virtual set you create on stage**

- use diagonal of stage to signify a long journey
- move backward on stage to go back in time
- move to speaker's right for the past; speaker's left for future
- if you establish a particular place (e.g. a car) be consistent throughout your speech

## VIII. Mindset

**Tip#46: Train like a champion!**

- Practice!
  - till it becomes natural again
  - everything! – props, clothing, entering, exiting
  - in front of different audiences
- Mind
  - 2nd place is not fine – you want to win!
  - use a favorite song to increase confidence
  - surround yourself with people who are better than you

**Tip#47: Deliver the best speech you can**

- stay focused on the essential message that changes the lives of your audience
- focus on making a connection to the audience
- competition is the place for you to refine the content and delivery of a single speech!

**Tip#48: Make a friend of your public speaking fear**

- it never goes away; practice helps (at least 3 times per day)
- get regular sleep and exercise
- drink warm decaffeinated liquids – glass of water every hour
- remember, your audience wants you to succeed
- keep notes in your pocket
- breathe slowly, deliberately through the diaphragm
- focus on your audience, not yourself

**Tip#49: Get feedback from experts**

- you are the final judge, but if multiple people give you the same advice – take corrective action

## IX. Leaving the Stage

### Tip#50: Pause to let your final words sink in

- pause, but be mindful of red timing light
- if necessary, signal the end of your speech with a gesture to the contest chair and say „Contest Chair“

### Tip#51: Exit confidently

- take applause in, smile
- shake hand of contest chair if possible
- walk off, head held high; some contestants wave to audience as sign of comfort and appreciation
- Warning: don't appear overly confident – save victory for later. Don't show disappointment or any self-judgement.

*„You cannot go wrong if you share a deep message rooted in an eternal truth embedded in a personal story that is mindful of the perspectives of a diverse audience.“ (Jeremey Donovan, page 52)*

Want to take it a step further? Here are resources I've found helpful. Remember to have fun and enjoy the journey! - Khushi

**Also by Jeremey Donovan**, HOW TO DELIVER A TED TALK

**Craig Valentine**, 1999 World Champion of Public Speaking  
[www.craigvalentine.com](http://www.craigvalentine.com)

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### **Evaluation Maven, Rodney Denno:**

Although this centers on tools for evaluation, it outlines good practice every speaker can use to improve their delivery and content.

<http://www.ewolving.com/EvaluationMavenManifesto2-AA-EWOL.pdf>

### **You Tube videos of winning speeches**

2015 World Champion: 'The Power of Words' Mohammed Qahtani,  
Toastmasters International <https://youtu.be/Iqq1roF4C8s>

3rd Place Winner 2016 World Championship of Public Speaking - Josephine Lee <https://youtu.be/miek-FY0flg>

Dananjaya Hettiarachchi, World Champion of Public Speaking 2014  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbz2boNSeL0>

Lance Miller, World Champion of Public Speaking 2005  
The Ultimate Question: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQSAYobiSuk>