

Five Tips for Commencement Speeches

Toastmasters International offers advice to graduation speakers

RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, Calif., May 27, 2014 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- Graduation season is officially underway, and notable celebrities such as Sean Combs, Katie Couric and Peyton Manning have been serving as commencement speakers. While nationally prominent figures might receive most of the headlines for their presentations, over the next few weeks thousands of lesser-known individuals will speak at an upcoming graduation ceremony.



[Toastmasters International](#), which has helped millions of men and women learn to speak with confidence and poise in front of audiences, offers five pointers for a great commencement speech:

1. **Keep it Brief.** Limit the speech to a maximum of 20 minutes. Both the graduates and the audience will be restless, so brevity is key.
2. **Make it Fun.** Use humor and keep the topics light-hearted. Commencement is a celebration for the graduates and their guests.
3. **Engage and Inspire.** Connect with the audience of graduates and their guests by providing appropriate anecdotes and examples that they can relate to.
4. **Be Yourself.** You'll lose the audience immediately if they feel you're not authentic. Don't be afraid to tell relevant personal stories that will grab the audience's attention.
5. **Practice, Practice, Practice.** Prior to graduation day, rehearse the speech in front of an audience who you can rely on to provide valuable feedback.

"It's important that commencement speeches don't come off as manufactured," says Jesse Mejia, a Toastmaster from Landover, Md., who was the keynote speaker at the 2013 University of Maryland College Park Latina/o Graduation Celebration Ceremony. "The audience of graduates and their family and friends don't want to hear overused cliches. Speaking from the heart resonates best with the audience."

Whether you're President Barack Obama delivering the commencement address at University of California, Irvine, a high school valedictorian speaking in front of your classmates or a community leader presenting in front of a local middle school, keep these five tips in mind and you'll put your stamp on a memorable day.

Toastmasters offers additional tips and information [for giving an impressive commencement address](#). To find a local Toastmasters club where you can improve your next presentation, visit www.toastmasters.org/findaclub.

About Toastmasters International

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of meeting locations. Headquartered in Rancho Santa Margarita, California, the organization's membership exceeds 292,000 in more than 14,350 clubs in 122 countries. Since 1924, Toastmasters International has helped people of all backgrounds become more confident in front of an audience. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, visit

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