

## COACHING GUIDE: RESOURCE 10

### How to Coach Speech Writing

**To craft engaging, compelling speeches, it is important to start with how ideas are selected, written, and organized.**

Remind students that speech writing is different than regular writing, since the listener has to be able to learn, remember the content, and stay engaged without being able to go back and reread what the speaker just said.

Coaches play a key role in the speech-writing process, both as a sounding board and as a source of feedback on ideas, organization, language choice, and reasoning. Even with limited time, it is better to focus deeply on two or three main areas than to try and cover everything. It takes time to improve speech writing skills, so it's important to give students focus and time to develop.

#### Overall Coaching Approach:

Do's:	Dont's:
Encourage students to get all the ideas out and avoid trying to be too perfect at the beginning.	Avoid telling them exactly what to do and instead guide them with questions.
If working 1:1, take notes on a student's intended ideas to help document thoughts that may not have made it to the page.	Avoid putting too many of their ideas into your words or your agenda.
Understand the essence of what they are trying to say and what ideas they find most important.	Avoid steering them away from what originally excited them (even if refocusing their ideas).
Balance different types of feedback, including both positive reinforcement and constructive criticism, making sure everything is as concrete and actionable as possible.	Avoid making them change everything all at once, or letting them get too far along in the writing process before being able to give feedback.

#### What To Refine Over Time:

Writing Area	Focus On...	Watch Out For...
Passion	Is the student speaking about what is deeply important to him/her?	Generic content, focusing on what someone thinks others want to hear, content that is too far outside the student's expertise and interest.
Scope and Coverage	How much content is the student trying to cover and how much time to cover it?	Too many complex ideas, too many different directions, too many thoughts.
Audience Fit	Are the student's ideas aligned with the purpose of the talk and the interests of the audience?	Examples that aren't relevant or accessible to the audience, or conclusions disconnected from the audience.

Writing Area	Focus On...	Watch Out For...
Organization and Sequence	Are the ideas structured into larger “buckets” or categories and are they covered in an order that promotes understanding and connection?	Jumping around too many thoughts that don’t relate to one another, rambling or stream-of-consciousness ideas, not planning a clear outline.
Previews and Recaps	Does the student preview ideas before going into the speech, and then summarize the important takeaways?	Moving too quickly into the body of the speech, giving examples without context, or ending too soon.
Stories and Examples	Does the student bring in the humanity behind the main ideas through stories and examples?	Abstract content that stays too high level, stating ideas without elaborating further or presenting other views.
Evidence and Reasoning	Does the student support the more controversial ideas with credible evidence and logical reasoning?	Too little or too much evidence that doesn’t serve to illustrate and defend the main ideas, evidence that isn’t credible, too many logic leaps.
Transitions	Are there transitions between ideas and do the transitions help the audience follow and prepare for each idea?	Awkward silences between slides, abrupt changes between ideas, stilted transitions that are hard to follow.
Wording Choice	Is the language powerful and memorable, helping the audience visualize the content or retain certain phrases?	Lack of description, unintentional repetition, words that lack “umph”, words that don’t paint a picture.
Pacing and Build	Does the student spend the appropriate amount of time on each idea and do the ideas build on one another?	Too much time spent on simple ideas, too much time on abstract content without bringing in stories, questions, or examples, flat ideas that don’t move the message forward.
Length	Are the sentences concise and does the speech itself stay within the required time limit?	Rambling ideas or run-on sentences, lack of destination to the speech as a whole, cramming too many ideas into a short time limit.

