## ESU SKILLS GUIDE



# SPEECH MAKING AND PUBLIC SPEAKING: CHOOSING A TOPIC (SECONDARY) #esufestivalofspeaking

#### What should I do?

Speakers may interpret the ESU Festival of Speaking themes in any way they wish. Themes for the festival are deliberately broad and do not suggest any specific subject area. Students should remember that the audience online will be hearing many speeches based around the same theme, so an original or creative interpretation of the theme, with an interesting or memorable speech title, is likely to be most effective.

Speakers are equally encouraged to speak on something else entirely - just speak out!

#### Am I interested in the topic?

No one should write a speech on a topic or subject area about which they are not interested. Enthusiasm is difficult to fabricate and, without it, speakers cannot hope to engage with their audience. Conversely, many speakers also try to avoid writing a speech on a topic or subject area of which they have very detailed knowledge, as the inability to get all their knowledge into a five-minute speech can be quite frustrating. For those reasons, speakers often try to strike a balance between the two extremes: they choose a topic or subject area which they do not know a lot about, but in which they are genuinely interested.

### Will my topic capture the interest of the audience?

The audience do not necessarily have to be initially interested in the speaker's topic to be persuaded by the speech! Speakers should try to make their speech more engaging by demonstrating the relevance of their arguments to the audience (e.g. the allocation of government resources may seem like a boring topic to some, until one considers that the topic could be linked to the availability of teachers or hospital beds. Similarly, intellectual property law may be something that few people are interested in until one considers its link to illegal downloading of films and music.).

### Will I be able to research my topic effectively?

Speakers will need a certain amount of evidence to support their arguments and persuade the audience. The speaker's topic must be one which they can research effectively using the resources available to them (books at home, internet etc.). Researching the topic area is important to make a really effective presentation.

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# Will I be able to discuss my topic in the limited time available for an online audience?

Some topics or subject areas are particularly obscure or otherwise unfamiliar and would require a significant amount of explanation to make the information accessible to the audience. Any background, contextual or technical information required should not take up more than a few sentences of the speech. If such information requires elaborate explanation, students should consider refining their topic so that the speech can be most effective!

Plan. Practise. Perform. Post!

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