ESU TEACHING RESOURCE

Notes

Many students struggle to know how to use notes and some, especially those taking on the role of Speaker, go so far as to learn the entire speech and have no notes at all. There is no right way, but I would advise against full memorisation, just as I would never want to see a student reading their speech out from a full script on the day!

The latter reading approach lacks all spontaneity and will result in the speaker being utterly detached from the audience at the very least. The former – all from memory – is fine as a speaker can maintain their links with the audience and not get too tied up with a script. The greatest danger – and I have witnessed it all too often, however – is when the train of thought is suddenly lost and the speaker just dries up; sometimes they have to stop completely. This can entirely wreck a young person's confidence, the very opposite of what we all want to achieve!

My advice is for all students to have some notes with the main structure, key facts, quotations and other important points written down. The students should know what they are going to say, but they should not be afraid to have prompt-cards! This will mean that they will be able to look up, engage with the audience and hold their attention.

As for notes, avoid both A4 paper (or larger) and also tiny cards that can be concealed in the palm of the hand, but are very hard to read. Do not let your students use a spiral pad and turn over the pages or toss each used noe-card on the table. Never allow tablets or mobile phones for notes.

- I would suggest a decent-sized set of note-cards (not too big, nor too small). It is fine for notecards to be visible as long as they are not obtrusive.
- Get the student to number each card (or even have them treasury-tagged) in case they get dropped.
- Do not let them write on both sides as that can often lead to cards getting in the wrong order or upside down ...
- Make sure the notes are in large enough writing/font size to be easily referred to by the speaker without having to squint at them.