

# They're All Around Us

## What's the big idea? The idea for your next manual speech, that is.

Are you spending more time thinking about what to talk about than you spend preparing your speech, and does the Toastmasters emphasis on "better thinking" seem to be primarily an exercise in meditating on speech topics?

Finding ideas and material for speeches appears to be a major problem for many Toastmasters, but it need not be. Knowing where to find topic sources does not require special ability or long hours of thought.

Speech topics are all around us; they can be found among our personal experiences, from our observation of people and events, from the reading and listening we do, and from the exchange of ideas with our associates. These all may spark our imagination and provide us with a subject for our future Toastmasters club presentations.

Every idea is a seedling for a strong speech. The Toastmaster who possesses a natural inquisitiveness, and who is alert to the many speech subjects that are offered to us each day, has much less difficulty finding something to talk about.

How often have you noticed the cluster of initials and numbers that are listed on the cab of interstate commercial vans or buses? Did you wonder what the initials stand for and why they are used? An inquiry to a trucking firm not only would supply the answer, but it probably would provide you with material for a speech about the trucking industry, about government regulation of interstate transportation, or the impact of the industry's accomplishments on your community.

Be curious!

## Interesting Ideas

"Why" is a small but potent word that can uncover interesting ideas about the commonplace, but unexplored occurrences around us. Look to the commonplace for the unusual; to the everyday events which are taken for granted. You may find many worthwhile speech subjects in disguise.

A youngster once asked why the front wheels of his father's automobile straightened themselves after this father had driven around a corner. Have you too wondered why? The answer would provide

an illuminating speech for a Toastmasters meeting, and it would be an interesting addition to fellow members' knowledge. See how simple it is to discover speech subjects?

Consider the speech topics that are available around your home or office—the cover on the lampshade, old china dishes, furniture, food, and clothing. There is a story connected with each one. Look at your garden, think of your life in your family, your community, your state and your nation, and your heritage as a citizen. Any one of these topics, plus a little imagination, should ring a bell. We are surrounded by potential speech material. Be imaginative!

Take stock of your own interests and special knowledge. Do you know something that would benefit others? What do you wish you had known as a young married person; can you provide this information for others in your next speech?

## Think of Others

Think of other people's needs and how your experience might be an aid to them. How about pointers on buying a home—wouldn't young couples find this a subject of prime interest? How about your experiences or advice on the best buy in insurance, on investments, on do-it-yourself projects, or on any number of "how to" topics?

One of the keys to finding speech ideas is to select a personal experience, analyze its significance, both personal and in general, and then build a message around it that you believe will be of value to your listeners. Much of the strength of such a speech lies in your honest interpretation of first-hand experience. By its nature this speech will be unique and usually interesting to the audience.

Ideas and materials come from a wide variety of contacts you make; from discussions in your place of work, from political campaigns, trade publications, opinions and attitudes of businessmen, book reviews, local historical events, the news media, and advertising.

## Listen for Ideas

You will find too that the habit of critically listening to other talks, particularly those delivered at Toastmasters meetings, is another excellent way to assimilate in-

formation and ideas that may help you prepare speeches of your own. Toastmasters training in evaluation makes it quite easy to analyze a speech for ideas as well for the technique of speaking.

Many Toastmasters find that one of the easiest ways to get an idea for a speech is simply to recall a recent conversation they have had on a subject that interests them.

Probably within the past week or two you have had an interesting discussion with a friend or business associate on a topic on which you have definite opinions. The ideas that you expressed in your discussion with him are good speech material. You can add to your speech material simply by discussing the topic further with others. You can engineer an entire speech in this fashion, and it will afford you an opportunity to say what you wish you'd said in the first place.

## Many Possibilities

If you have selected a subject which at first glance doesn't seem to fit the purpose of the assignment, meet the challenge by reviewing the possibilities of using vocal variety, gestures, or visual aids to emphasize your message.

Continual guidance in formulating ideas and materials for your speeches is available from articles published in *The Toastmaster* magazine, *TIPS*, and in materials listed in the *Supply Catalog* provided to your club for use. Which articles are of special interest to you, and what have you to offer to expand the same theme? Which paragraph can you build into an entire speech? How can the ideas that are presented be put to use in your club? Why should your club undertake the program that is suggested in the article?

You see, speech ideas and materials are all around us. We merely have to think, be inquisitive, and be imaginative.

What will be your next big idea?

*Reprinted from The Toastmaster magazine.*

