

How to Use Humor Effectively in Speeches

To develop your sense of humor and prepare you for using humor in speeches try one or all of the following:

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| 1-Become familiar with humor classics. | 2- Study comedy techniques. |
| 3-Watch professional comedians and humorists. | 4-Take a dancing class. |
| 5-Watch comedies for rhythm, tempo, timing, and delivery. | 6-Take an acting class. |
| 7-Practice gestures in front of a mirror. | 8-Get voice training. |
| 9-Read 15 minutes of jokes every day. | 10-Tell at least one new joke each day. |

When using humor in speeches or when telling a joke to a friend:

1. Tell the joke or story in the fewest words possible. The size of the laugh is directly proportional to the number of words used to reach the punch line. When you add flowery phrases and irrelevant verbiage, you are doing nothing more than imposing your ego on a helpless audience.
2. Rehearse material until it becomes second nature.
 - a. Repeat the funny story aloud over and over until you can tell it without the slightest mistake.
 - b. Record it, then listen to it and ask:
 - i. Have you told it in the least number of words possible?
 - ii. Practice. Tell it to the mailman, the butcher, the neighbor, the spouse. Practice.
 - iii. Edit out the unnecessary words. Practice. Tell it to anybody who will listen, then when you feel completely comfortable telling it, it may be speech ready.
3. Never tell a joke or story just to get a laugh. The joke or story must make, illustrate, or support a point. No purpose is served by telling a funny story that is unrelated to the subject about which you are speaking. Use humor that is pertinent to your subject.
4. Don't blame the audience if they don't respond. Maybe you told the wrong joke to the wrong audience. Perhaps you didn't deliver the joke properly. It could be that the joke or story is placed in the wrong spot in your presentation.
5. It is important to get the right kind of laugh in the right place. A shock laugh (off-color) or an embarrassed laugh (tasteless), or a groan (pun) are the wrong kinds of laughter to seek in a speech. Finding the right joke and placing it properly takes time.
6. If the joke or story didn't work don't try to explain it! Move on as if it was not supposed to be funny!
7. Don't laugh at your own funny stories. Laughing at your own humor is the same as applauding yourself.
8. Never introduce a joke or funny story with something like: "I want to tell you something that will make you laugh." Lead into your humor just as you would any other part of your speech.
9. Personalize your humor. Tell it on yourself or on someone the audience knows. Never use humor to embarrass an audience member.
10. Make your humor believable. An audience will laugh louder and longer if the funny story has a ring of truth. The key words are "ring of truth." It doesn't have to be a true story – it could be one you adapt to make a point. Exaggeration and embellishment will usually make funny true stories even funnier.