

WRITING A CAMPAIGN SPEECH

Writing the Introduction

Find an attention-grabbing opening statement. To begin your speech for student council president, you need to begin with a strong, attention grabbing opening. You'll likely be giving this speech during school hours, so your classmates' attention spans might be a bit strained.

- Do not merely start by saying, "My name is ___ and I'm running for student council." Your classmates will already know as much and this is not really a unique statement. There will be time to state the basic information after you've gotten the class's attention.
- You can open with a question. Something like, "If there was one thing you could change about this school, what would it be?" Or a question that adds some humor, like, "I know what you're thinking. Why should I listen to this person?" and then proceed to lay out your credentials. Quotes on leadership, power, and guidance would also make good openings. However, make sure to double check your sources and especially if you're finding quotes online. Many online quote databases, like Quote Garden or Brainy Quote, sometimes attribute quotes to the wrong sources.
- If you're stuck, look up and read famous speeches. You can find many speeches from presidents, world leaders, civil rights activists, and others online. Pay attention to how they opened their speeches and ask yourself, "Was this interesting? Do I want to keep reading/listening? Why?"

State the basics. Once you've gotten your audience's attention, you should state the basics. Talk briefly about who you are and why you're running.

- State your name and your place or grade in school. This may feel somewhat unnecessary if you go to a small school, but it's considered a formality. If you're missing this part of the speech, you may end up looking sloppy in comparison to other students.
- State what you want. That is, what you're running for. Do you want to be the president, vice president, treasurer, secretary? Even if you think most students are aware of what position you're running for, make sure you state it here to remind them.
- Try to keep this section brief as it's not as important as your qualifications and plans to improve the school. Even one sentence would suffice. For example, "My name is Ramona Hart, I'm in the 11th grade, and I'm running for treasurer of the student council."

List your qualifications. Perhaps the most important part of your intro is listing your qualifications. Students need to know what they have to gain by voting for you.

- Any accomplishments relevant to the position warrant mentioning here. If you're running for secretary, for example, talk about your summer job filing papers in your uncle's law firm. If you're running for student council president, talk about your leadership experience being captain of the swim team.
- While this section is important, try to keep it minimal. A couple of sentences laying out your qualifications is enough as the body of your speech is where you should spend the most time. For example, let's go back to the above example. From there, we could say, "I am currently enrolled in advanced placement algebra and I have been an honor roll student for three years. This knowledge of numbers and diligence qualifies me to have responsibility for finances for our student council."

Writing the Body of the Speech

State your main ideas on how to improve the school. You should have at least three ideas you feel would benefit your school and classmates. This gives your classmates incentive to vote for you and shows you want the position as an opportunity to help others.

- You should list your ideas and then expand on them later in the body. It might take a bit of research to figure out what you want to change. Ask around the school, talking to students and teachers, and see where there's room for improvement. What are the concerns of the students? What are people happy with regarding the school? What would they like to see change? Asking these questions can help you get a sense of your audience and community.
- Remember, you should not make promises you cannot keep. Do not say anything just to get elected. While many students might want gum chewing policies eliminated or for the lunch period to run twice as long, this is probably not necessary or possible. Try to focus on areas that seem important to keeping your school running safely and efficiently. Concerns about things like student behavior, academic standards, and extracurricular activities should be your concern over fun and games.
- A good opening statement for your body would state the causes important to you and what you plan to do about them. For example, if you were running for president, you could say something like, "I understand we need to improve how we handle student disputes, increase interest in extracurricular activities, and expand access to AP courses throughout the school. As your president, I would work to bring in speakers to talk about sensitivity in the classroom, increase advertising for basketball games and quiz tournaments, and start a tutoring program to help students struggling with certain subjects."

Find support for those ideas. You should do a little extra research in addition to talking to classmates and teachers. Have some specific plans on how you would enact change in your school.

- You do not have to have a point by point plan laid out, but a few sentences on some preliminary ideas can help you stand out from your peers. People are more inclined to vote for someone who's thought about how to solve problems in addition to identifying problems.

Keep your ideas short but very strongly worded. Your body should be about two paragraphs of 5 to 6 sentences each. This might sound brief, considering how much information you'll have to get across, but you have limited time and must keep people's attention. It can help to write more than you need and gradually cut down your speech to the bare essentials. This will help it to be shorter meaning that students won't get bored when to listen to your speech.

Ending with a Strong Conclusion

Reiterate your main points briefly. When you reach your conclusion, briefly go over your main points. A one to two sentence summary of your plans as president should start off your conclusion. Something like, "With my experience and passion, I believe I could be a great leader. I promise to do my best to increase student interest in the school, and increase overall academic achievement."

Emphasize your benefits to the audience. You should emphasize your benefits to the audience one last time. However, do so differently than you did in the initial introduction.

- Do summarize, briefly, your qualifications but do not put the main focus on them. This is where you should sincerely state your passion. Students should not just vote for you because you'd do a good job but because you genuinely care about the school. State your passion for your community and how much you want to see other students succeed. Lots of students have high qualifications. You can set yourself apart by being a candidate who really cares.

Ask the audience for their vote. The last part of your speech should be a sincere request that the audience votes for you. Try to come off as humble. Instead of saying, "I expect your vote next Saturday!" say something like, "I would be honored if anyone of you chose to vote for me next Saturday."

Tips

- Use a quote, or search up 'Speech One Liners' to start of with something funny to grab their attention. Find things that are current and fit with the cool things everyone identifies with.
- Only promise to do things that you really can do.
- Practice reading your speech a few times, as you'll likely be nervous before giving it.
- **Have someone look over your speech.** Have a friend or family member, or even a teacher, you trust to take a look at your speech. Ask for honest feedback, even if it's negative. You should write your speech, at least, a couple weeks before the election so you have time to have a few people look it over and give you advice. You should even give them on a number based answer from 1-5.
- Research what other student council speeches are like on video websites. This could help give you ideas.
- Student council candidates should not attack each other, previous leaders, or other students. Otherwise, you could get into trouble and leave a bad impression on voters.

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