



Friends of
the Earth

PULL-OUT

It's time to talk

There are going to be occasions when you'll want to tell people about your campaign formally, perhaps by a talk or presentation. Some people love public speaking, but even if you loathe it, with the aid of these tried and tested top talk tips from FOE's great new book on successful community campaigning, *How To Win*, you can be sure to get your message across painlessly.

Why give a talk?

- To urge other groups and organisations to support your campaign.
- To persuade decision makers such as your local authority to implement what you want.
- To let other organisations know about your work as part of a fund raising/recruitment drive.

Before you agree to do a talk think through the following questions:

- **How will it further the work of our group?**
- **What will people do as a result of hearing me – join our campaign, join our group, sign our petition, give us money?**
- **Am I the right person to give this talk?**
- **Do I have the time to do it?**

Do not feel pressurised into doing something just because you are asked to do it. If it does not fit in with your campaign objectives, or if you are too busy – just say no.

If you do decide to go ahead with the talk, prepare by doing the groundwork:

- **What exactly does the person who first asked me to talk want me to talk about? Is the brief the same?**
- **Who is the audience? Are they potential allies or potential enemies?**
- **Is it a presentation or a debate? If it is a debate, who else is speaking?**
- **How much time do I have for my talk?**
- **What equipment will be available to help, eg, slide projector, overhead projector, flipchart?**

Prepare properly

Do not gamble on being all right on the night with a couple of pages of scribbled notes. Careful preparation will make your talk sound professional.

Decide on the objective of your presentation and which bits of information are crucial to include in your talk. Then structure your talk so that it has a:

Beginning:

Introduction -- who I am, why me, I'm here to talk about..., because..., I'm going to talk for 20 mins... etc.

Middle:

Stick to three or four points (along the lines of what is the problem, what you can do, what we have done) as this is what most people will remember.

End:

Summarise the main points and finish on an upbeat call to action, eg. "If there is one thing I'd like you to remember/do after this evening it is..."

Practice

Write or type out your entire speech on paper and then rehearse it. On the day, do not read your speech as it will only sound monotonous and has no chance of allowing you to grab people's attention. If necessary, write down the key points on cards and use these as a prompt during your talk. Go through your speech in your head, whenever you can. You do not have to know it off by heart but you should know the general outline. This will make your talk sound natural and interesting to listen to.

Practice in front of people (or even in front of a mirror). It may feel silly standing up in your front room, but it will make the real thing go much smoother. The advantage of saying your speech in front of people is that they will be able to pick up on any nervous habits, such as saying "um" or "you know". Once you are aware of habits like this they are much easier to control.

Humour can make the presentation more enjoyable. If it is an evening meeting people will have given up their free time to be there. You do not have to be a stand-up comic, but the odd flash of humour will warm people to you and your campaign.



Top tips for speech writing

- *Reinforce your points with a few facts. Do not overdo it and make sure they are accurate.*
- *Think about what might appeal to your audience.*
- *Always emphasise the benefits of what your group is doing.*
- *Be positive: If you've had a success or something has gone well, say so.*
- *Plan your speech so that people's feelings move along, eg. if you want to fire people up, make sure you leave them with hope and determination.*
- *Avoid jargon unless you are certain that your audience will be familiar with it.*

Before the talk

Check out the venue before you give your presentation. Arrive early so that you can familiarise yourself with the room and the equipment. Get a friend to sit at the back of the room and practice the start of your talk to check if you can be heard from the back of the room.



An OHP can be a very useful tool

Visual aids

Use visual aids to focus the audience's attention and illustrate your points. Consider how you are going to use these. Which is the best medium – a flipchart, an overhead projector (OHP) or slides? They do not need to be fancy computer-produced materials but they do need to be easy to read/interpret. Do not have too many – one overhead transparency or slide per minute of your talk is ample.

Giving your talk

Remember the audience wants to hear a good presentation – not put you on trial. If you have prepared well then this should help calm your nerves. Everyone is human and likely to make mistakes – what may seem like glaring errors to you may be missed by the audience who does not know your presentation. Even if things go disastrously wrong the main thing to remember is that you are there to get a message across.

Do not talk to your overheads – speak to the audience and especially the people at the back of the room. Speak more slowly and clearly than in everyday conversation. If people ask you to speak up, make sure that you do. It may feel like you are shouting but if the acoustics in the room are bad the people at the back will need all the help they can get.



PolyP

Not on trial: Think about what might interest the audience. Will gloomy facts about species extinction or positive campaign successes appeal more?

Questions

Questions show that people are interested in what you have said. Remember that you are likely to know far more about the issue than they do. If people ask you tricky questions pause briefly and collect your thoughts before answering them. If you do not know the answer, do not be afraid to say so. Either pass them on to another person in the room who may know, or say that you will get back to questioner with information when you have had a chance to find out. Do not go into intricate discussion on a minor detail with just one person in the audience. You can always say words to the effect of, "This is an interesting issue – maybe we can continue this discussion after the meeting?"

What else to take with you

Take campaign materials including any fliers, briefings, leaflets and membership forms. Remember to have collecting tins on the door, so that people can donate to your campaign. A sheet of paper for people to sign up for more information will be essential as people rush to join after your rallying cry.

Top tips for giving talks

- *Inject a personal note – tell a story (short!) about something that happened to you or relay your thoughts – even if it's just a quick aside. It makes you seem human and people may then forgive any fumbles you make.*
- *Don't be fooled into thinking that you have to know everything. The best talks have a clear theme or message running through them. Make the most of being one of the 'people' and appeal to your audience.*



Campaign mission ■

To get your hands on brilliant campaigning advice drawn from almost 30 years of Friends of the Earth's community-based campaigning experience.

Next step ■

Turn to the back cover and complete the order form for *How to Win* now!

How to Win provides anyone who wants to get a campaign started with the first steps on how to run, and win, a local campaign.