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How to begin a speech



*Convincing
right from
the start*

100 ideas for 1000 custom beginnings

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“In every beginning lives a magic hold”
Hermann Hesse

Foreword

This book shows you 100 different possibilities on how to begin a speech in a very impressive way. In real life there are not exactly 100 ways to begin a speech neither have I found, in years of research, the 100 ultimate beginnings. The reason for the title is that the capacity of the book is limited.

Just as there are endless ways to begin a conversation or to address someone, there are endless ways to start a speech. Let yourself be inspired and take a few suggestions. Every example should help you to find an idea of your own, so that you are able to say: Great! I will begin my speech just like that. My wife discovered her favorite beginning immediately, when she was correcting this book.

Additionally, I will present to you the eleven beginnings that I would avoid or at least would improve. Many beginnings are superfluous and boring.

When you have finished reading this book and you are able to give a thrilling, unconventional and just different speech, then the aim of the book has been achieved. Because audiences don't love anything more than being stimulated, impressed or surprised. And they don't hate anything more than being bored. Therefore, it won't matter what you are talking about.

As soon as you stand in front of a group, you are stealing a large amount of people's time. Be careful with it! Then people will come and listen to you a second time.

Imagine the following: The group in front of you is a living creature, a creature that consists of many small organisms. And these organisms can get their own dynamic very quickly, which you won't be able to control any longer. Spectators are voluntarily quiet once they decide that you are allowed to present. However they can change their mind at any time. They can decide to heckle, to laugh sarcastically or stand up, leave the room and slam the door.

It is a very special moment when hundreds of people decide to be quiet from the beginning for a longer time and to listen to just one single person. This is an acknowledgment, this is an honor, and this is a little miracle. The thrill couldn't be greater.

Everything which follows now shows the direction, it defines the tone and it fulfills the expectations - or perhaps not. Now is the moment of truth whether it was valuable to dress up elegantly, to jump into the next traffic jam and to pay the expensive babysitter.

Don't let this special opportunity go to waste, make it a great moment.

Have fun!

Michael

Introduction

Many, many years ago a film in cinema or on TV began with long opening credits, where fitting music was played when the cast was presented.

On the first twenty pages of a book, the acting characters were presented before they had their first adventure together. At school the teacher explained, that a speech requires an introduction at the beginning.

In this book there are no tips for introductions, but for beginnings. It doesn't matter whether it is a speech, a video clip, a podcast or a televised interview

Today we begin directly: we start, we fight for attention, we want attentiveness. When we get it, it is still possible that we have to announce a few technical things or that we say something essential that has to be said. But in modern films they show you the main characters too, but after you have already arrived in the story.

At the beginning it will be strange for you, that a human being should enter the stage and just begin. But we are living in a time where people have informed themselves exactly where they go and to whom they will listen to and about which subject.

Even though you don't know this - when you took your seat, you decided to sit down for a while. Quiet please, the fun starts!

Wrong beginnings

Rearrange the audience

It can be very difficult to deliver a speech in a very big hall where there are only a few people. The audience feels lost, the mood is bad and the speaker's perspective is demotivating.

Block off the seats in the back rows, if you want to make a film for example and you want the room to look full. Hire an attendant who takes care that every seat is occupied in the first rows or give everyone a numbered seat.

But if the spectators are already sitting, it is too late. Someone who is forced to change their seat often only does it reluctantly. It should be an exception to ask people to change places who have taken their seats. No one likes to give up the seat they have already chosen. Even when the first row is empty you can't remove the first row. Then people in the second row are suddenly sitting in the first row...

The structure or agenda

From my point of view this is a common mistake: Most speakers give a short overview for the audience what is to come at the beginning. Maybe it is a schedule, maybe the structure of their speech or the composition of their argumentation. Something like this:

First of all I'd like to have a short glance into the past, then we will discuss in detail the here and now so at the end in a very brave step we will take a look into the future...

It bores them to death, because the tension is completely gone. When we talk about our holidays, we don't begin like: Let me give you a short overview over the different kind of watersports, then I will describe in a few sentences our hotel and at the end I will tell you about three excursions. In a good novel, things start right away.

Just as he came around the corner he knew that he would have not a single chance...

For a speech which should bring people to action, which should be exciting, which should make people interested in a subject or which introduces new scientific cognitions, an overview of the content of the speech is, from my prospective, a wrong beginning.

Structure, agenda, time table, overview... these are all valuable in a lesson. If you are holding lectures or you want to teach people something. Then your pupils love it when they can see exactly what you are intending to say. Pupils and students learn more easily with a structure and it is easier for them to connect to something they already know when they are very sure what will be discussed.

!

A fanfare

Some speakers love music for their appearance. At a fair for example, when there is no MC it can be very helpful to be announced with music. I am often asked what kind of music I would like at the beginning of my performance.

But be careful with too much emotionalism. If the melody of "Star Wars" can be heard or the trumpets of Jericho together with the Vienna philharmonic orchestra, then you have to fill the expectations. If something really