# **The art of public speaking — auseful skill to help your child get ahead in life**

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Want to improve your child's public speaking skills? Here are some useful tips on public speaking and how to select the right public speaking topics for kids.

"Speech is power; speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Yes, such is the power of speech. Therefore, of all the key life skills, public speaking is a very important one for kids.

Effective public speaking is an art that can keep the listeners spellbound. Great speakers around the world have touched the lives of millions of people through their engaging and enthralling speeches. An example is Swami Vivekananda's inspiring speech at the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. It is still remembered as one of the most spirited speeches in the history of mankind.

**Benefits of public speaking skills:**

So, why is public speaking for kids such an important skill? Let's look at some of the benefits of the art of public speaking for children:

* Makes them feel confident in communicating with others
* Helps them overcome the fear and anxiety associated with voicing their opinions
* Encourages them to improve their reading and listening skills
* Improves their academic performance and overall knowledge
* Enhances leadership and management skills
* Teaches planning, discipline, and time management
* Promotes logical and analytical thinking

While the art of public speaking comes naturally to some children, most get nervous when asked to speak before a gathering. If your child is reluctant to speak in front of others, or you want to improve her public speaking skills, here are a few vital tips:

* **Listen to speeches**: The best way to acquire public speaking skills is to learn them from those who have mastered them. So, take your child to public events where eminent speakers deliver their speeches. If this isn't possible, have your child listen to good public speakers online. This could ignite in him a passion for public speaking.
* **Read a lot**: Reading is the best way to learn new words and ideas. It also helps in understanding how to frame phrases and sentences. Reading aloud improves diction and expression. Encourage your child to read a lot of books and newspapers. This will not only strengthen her vocabulary but also make her speak with clarity.
* **Train with peers**: Ask your child to become a part of, or get together a group of children interested in public speaking. You can allow the group to meet regularly at your house. This way, the children can listen to and learn from each other's speeches, give feedback, point out mistakes, suggest ideas for improvement, and become more confident. You can also become a part of the group and act as a guide.
* **Learn to tell stories**: Stories always sound interesting to listeners. Any public speaker who has the skill to weave little stories in his speech endears himself to the audience. Encourage your child to read a lot of stories. Usually, stories from sources like the Panchatantra, Jataka Tales, Aesop's Fables, and Arabian Nights come in very handy. Also, teach him how to connect these stories with his speech.
* **Be humorous**: When everything else fails, humor comes to the rescue. A good public speaker delivers a humourous punch to lighten the mood and reconnect with the audience, especially when they begin to show signs of disinterest. Let your child practice the art of cracking a joke in the middle of a speech. For this, she needs to note down good jokes whenever she comes across them, and use them at appropriate times during her speech. She should also develop a natural sense of good humor.
* **Utilize opportunities**: Tell your child to utilize every opportunity to address an audience. The best place to do this is his school. Encourage him to address students whenever his teachers ask him to do so. He can also participate in elocution competitions, debates, and discussions to hone his skills.
* **Practice speaking**: This is probably the most important tip. Everything gets better with practice, and the same applies to the art of public speaking. Ask your child to speak standing in front of a mirror, pretending to address a large audience. This will help him improve his pronunciation and accent, and fine-tune his body language which is vital in impressing the audience. He can also record his speech, play it back and listen to it. This will help him better his speaking skills.