



ElevateVoices Literacy Kit

Speak, Read, Lead: A Public Speaking & Literacy Practice Booklet

Public Speaking Practice

3 word speech game: In this activity, each speaker will give a 90-second speech using three surprise words (enlist another person to give them to you!) At the start of the speech, the speaker will receive their first word and begin speaking about it immediately. After 30 seconds, they will receive a second word. The speaker must connect the first word to the second word smoothly and continue speaking without stopping. After another 30 seconds, they will receive a third word and must connect the second word to the third word in the same way. The goal is to keep speaking for the full 90 seconds with no long pauses, while making the speech sound as natural and connected as possible. Speakers should focus on creativity, confidence, and smooth transitions between ideas.

After you perform the activity once, check off what you did well! Try 2-3 more times!

Skill	First Try	Second Try	Third Try
Spoke clearly	☐	☐	☐
Made eye contact	☐	☐	☐
Talked for the whole time	☐	☐	☐
Had strong posture	☐	☐	☐
Finished confidently	☐	☐	☐
Used creative examples	☐	☐	☐
Had smooth transitions	☐	☐	☐



CWI Format Practice

C - Claim - What is your main point?

W - Why - Why is your claim true? What evidence or reasoning supports it?

I - Impact - Why does it matter?

Short Example on the following topic: *Cats are better than dogs*

Claim: Cats are better pets than dogs because they are usually less aggressive.

Warrant: Cats tend to be less active and less territorial in public spaces compared with dogs, which can make them calmer and less likely to react aggressively.

- **Evidence:** According to the CDC, dog bites are a common public health concern, while serious injuries from cats are less common.

Impact: Less aggressive animals are safer and easier to manage, especially for families, children, and people living in smaller homes or apartments. This makes cats a better choice for many pet owners.

Now it's your turn! Choose a topic below or make your own and practice on a piece of paper. Remember to practice making arguments SUPPORTING and OPPOSING your topic.

Topic Ideas:

- Social media does more harm than good.
- Schools should switch to a four-day week.
- Standardized testing should be eliminated.
- The voting age should be lowered to 16.
- Artificial intelligence should be used in classrooms.
- College should be free.
- Plastic water bottles should be banned.
- Public transportation should be free.



Strong Speech Sentence Starters

To start your speech:

- Today, I want to talk about ____.
- One issue that matters to me is ____.
- Have you ever wondered why ____?
- I believe that ____ because ____.

To explain your reasoning:

- This matters because ____.
- One reason is ____.
- For example, ____.
- This shows that ____.

To explain the impact:

- This is important because ____.
- If more people understood this, ____.
- This could help our community by ____.
- That is why we should ____.

Exploring an Issue in your Community

Before you can give a strong advocacy speech, you need to choose an issue that matters to you. An issue is a problem, challenge, or need that affects people in a community. It can be big, like climate change or education access, or smaller and more local, like a lack of school supplies, unsafe sidewalks, or students feeling unheard.

The best advocacy topics usually connect three things:

What you care about

What affects other people

What could be improved



Step 1: Think About Your Communities

You are part of many communities. A community can be your school, neighborhood, family, city, cultural group, sports team, online space, or any group you care about.

List three communities you are part of:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Step 2: Notice Problems or Needs

Think about the communities you listed. What problems do people face? What feels unfair, frustrating, confusing, or ignored? Use the questions below to help you brainstorm.

At school, one issue I notice is:

In my neighborhood or community, one issue I notice is:

A problem young people often face is:

Something I wish more adults understood is:

A topic I care about personally is:

Step 3: Choose an Issue and Research It

Before giving an advocacy speech, it helps to learn more about your issue. Research gives your speech more credibility because it shows that your argument is based on facts, not just opinions.

Good research can include:

- A fact or statistic
- A short quote from an expert
- A real example from your school or community
- A personal observation
- A survey of students or community members



Step 4: Determine why your issue matters

This issue matters because:

The people most affected by this issue are:

If this issue improved, it would help people by:

Step 5: Come up with an Ask

Once you choose an issue, the next step is deciding what you want people to do about it. This is called your ask. An ask is a clear request for action. It tells your audience what change you want to see and how they can help.

A strong ask should be:

Specific: What exactly do you want to happen?

Realistic: Is this something people could actually do?

Connected: Does it clearly relate to your issue?

Actionable: Can your audience take the next step?

Sample Problem, Ask, and CWI

Problem: Our school does not have enough recycling bins in places where students throw away paper, bottles, and cans.

Ask: I am asking school leaders to place clearly labeled recycling bins next to trash cans in the cafeteria, hallways, and classrooms.

CWI Format

Claim: Our school should add 5 clearly labeled recycling bins in all 6 common areas.

Why: When recycling bins are hard to find, students are more likely to throw recyclable items into the trash. If bins are placed next to trash cans, recycling becomes easier and more convenient.

Impact: This would help our school reduce waste, keep recyclable materials out of the trash, and encourage students to make more environmentally responsible choices.

Now try to make your own speech based on your issue and your ask!



Elevating Your Speech

A strong speech does more than explain an issue. It helps the audience understand why the issue matters and why they should care. Use the strategies below to make your speech more specific, memorable, and persuasive.

1) Add personal examples into the Why section of your speech

Connect the issue to something you have seen, experienced, or noticed. This not only makes your speech stronger but it also adds evidence that your issue is real. It can also increase your credibility because you have personally experienced or seen your issue. Working with the example above, you could mention if you have seen students throwing their papers in the regular trash instead of the recycling bin.

2) Use a clear Call to Action in the Impact part of your speech

A call to action is the part of your speech where you explain what you want your audience to do next. After you describe a problem, your audience should understand how they can help solve it. A strong call to action should answer three questions:

Who should act?

Name the person or group who can help. This could be students, teachers, school leaders, parents, community members, or local officials.

What should they do?

Give a specific action. Avoid vague phrases like “help more” or “do better.” Instead, explain the exact step you want them to take.

Why does this action matter?

Connect the action back to the problem. Explain how this step would make the situation better.

3) Understand your Audience

Who will you be giving your speech to? Who are the stakeholders or the people who can create change?

Example Audiences:

- School
 - Teachers in a specific department at your school, local librarians, or administrators
- Community Members



- Business owners, workers in a specific industry, people living in your neighborhood
- Local legislators

Your audience matters because different people care about different details. Make sure you not only choose your audience carefully but also adapt your speech to fit your audience. For example, if you are advocating for more books in your local library, it doesn't make sense to give your speech to local legislators. Instead, give your speech to your local librarians. When you understand your audience, you can decide what examples to use, what words to explain, what tone to use, and what action to ask for.

4) Add a Hook

Start your speech with something that grabs the attention of your audience. This can be inserted before your Claim (C of CWI).

Examples: a question, personal story, surprising fact, or vivid image.

Sample Question Hook: Have you ever thrown away something recyclable just because you could not find a recycling bin?

Your Voice Matters

You learned how to build stronger speeches, explain your thoughts, support your ideas, and ask for change. These skills do not end with this booklet. You can use them in your classroom, your community, your family, and anywhere you want to make a difference. ElevateVoices is built on a simple idea: when young people are given the tools to communicate, they can become leaders. As you continue practicing, remember that confidence grows over time. You do not have to be perfect to be powerful. You just have to keep speaking, listening, learning, and leading. If you ever want to learn more, visit elevatevoices.org or email weelevatevoices@gmail.com anytime. We are always here to help!