

# Introducing Speakers

Submitted By: Teresa Nesbitt

*Purpose:*

- ◇ To gain an audience's attention
- ◇ To motivate the audience to listen
- ◇ To preview the speech/topic

*What needs to be done for a good introduction:*

- ◇ Prepare, practice and be enthusiastic
- ◇ Learn about the speaker, the topical nature of the subject, and the audience's interests or concerns
- ◇ Get the speaker's information (bio), probably from the speaker
- ◇ Ask what he/she would like emphasized or what is relevant
- ◇ Get some background on the audience from members and get subject information from the Program Chair
- ◇ Write out an introduction; practice it in front of the mirror or record it to check the timing
- ◇ Make it sound natural and enthusiastic.

*Fourteen Introduction Tips*

1. Know the speaker's name and how to pronounce it.
2. Know the speaker's title or position. Do not turn and ask the speaker "Is it Associate or Assistant Professor?"
3. Be brief. Aim for between one and three minutes.
4. Do not read the introduction. It will sound unenthusiastic and may convey the impression that you are unfamiliar with the subject. It is okay to bring notes to the lectern.
5. Smile and be enthusiastic in tone, gesture and choice of words.
6. Know enough about the subject to sound knowledgeable.
7. Announce the speech title as given to you by the speaker. If you have any questions about it, ask the speaker before the introduction. Many speakers select specific titles for a reason. If the speaker is not using a title, make sure that your description matches the speaker's.
8. Introductions are no place to use slides, overheads or presentation software.
9. Anecdotes are good but should pertain to the subject and harmonize with the mood of presentation.
10. If the credentials of the speaker are so outstanding that they must be shared with the audience or if there are publications the audience will want to know about, insert them in the program or prepare a separate commemorative handout.
11. Introduction of a panel of speakers is the same except the introducer needs to describe the structure and format of the panel (speaker order, length of time) and the various points of view and perspectives of the panellists. The introduction of the individual panellists can be done two ways: all at once or individually as the panel program progresses. Most audiences prefer a handout with the panellists' credentials so they can refer to it as the panel progresses.
12. Never use the old cliché that the speaker needs no introduction. If the introduction ties the speaker to the audience and the topic, then each introduction is unique, plus there is always something new to learn about every speaker.
13. You are the catalyst, not the performer. Do not try to upstage the speaker. Do not dwell on your relationship with the speaker, even though he or she is your boss, relative or significant other.
14. Identify yourself by name and title, unless this has already been done. Remember the speaker also needs to know who you are.

*This article was excerpted from materials prepared by Michèle Bickell for Leadership Skills Group (LSG) classes she led for members and was printed in the September 2005 edition of The Link.*

**If you would like to introduce or thank a speaker at one of our chapter meetings, please contact Kathy Moes. It is a supportive environment to hone your public speaking skills.**