

How to introduce a guest speaker

Introducing a guest speaker may seem a simple task but there are some do's and don't's.

Set the stage for the speaker by giving the audience an idea of what the topic is going to be and most importantly, by arousing the audience's interest in the topic.

Outline the speaker's background to show the audience why he/she is qualified to talk on the subject. Don't give an entire life history, but provide three or four qualifications that are related to the topic.

Be sure to state the speaker's name clearly and correctly (check your pronunciation with the speaker beforehand if necessary). If the

speaker's name is not on the program and the speaker is unfamiliar to the audience, mention his/her name several times during the introduction.

If the speaker's name appears on the program, you may mention the speaker's name only once by saying something like "Please welcome Jane Doe."

Another "do" is to be enthusiastic. Your enthusiasm towards the guest speaker will help arouse the audience's interest. A hearty handshake at the end of the introduction will also help to make the speaker feel comfortable.

It is important that you don't take longer than 60 seconds to make the

introduction; the guest speaker is the main attraction, not the person making the introduction. For the same reason, it is usually improper to tell jokes; let the speaker do the entertaining.

Give the impression that the person most suited to that audience is about to speak. Never state that the other speaker you tried to arrange, couldn't attend (if such was the case).

Statements like "...the speaker we have all been waiting for..." may be good for the guest speaker but it won't be a compliment to anyone else who has been speaking. Other cliches such as "without further ado" or "it is indeed a great pleasure..." are not as effective as ending with a simple "ladies and gentlemen, Jane Doe."

The introducer's final task is to lead the applause.

If you can get the audience keenly interested in the topic, respectful of the speaker's qualifications, and knowing the speaker's name in 60 seconds or less, including applause, you have done your job well.

*Chuck Jacobs
Leadership Development Specialist
Rural Organizations and
Services Branch*

