

TEAM OVATION'S 100 INSTANT SPEECH TOPICS

When we are asked to speak in a relatively open-ended sense, sometimes we could use a little help sparking the old creativity fire. Coming up with a speech topic can be difficult, especially if you find yourself saddled by time constraints or situational pressures. This is where we come in. Team Ovation has compiled a list of 100 Speech Topics to get the ball rolling, separated by event to help with the specifics. However, if you're feeling inspired, don't be bound by our suggested events. Feel free to use them in other situations, as well! The goal is to bring as much of yourself to your speech as possible- the more you, the better.

Holiday Office Party

1. **A favorite holiday memory:** Did you spend every Christmas in a snowy cabin? Was Hanukkah filled with traveling between Grandparents? Remember the year you got the toy you never thought you'd receive? Tell them about it.
2. **A personal holiday tradition:** Anything, large or small, that you do for yourself or others around the holidays. Give your audience a window into what makes your holidays unique, and you will share a unique quality about yourself.
3. **Holiday food in all its forms!:** Lay it on! Everyone loves talking turkey (and more!) around the holidays. Share your favorite holiday meal, or what you plan to create this year. Bonus points if you can let your office know how your meal preparations mimic your tasks at work.
4. **The best gift you've ever received:** Inevitably, joy and excitement will pour out when you discuss the best gift you received. Whether as a child or an adult, everyone can relate to that feeling of getting exactly what you wanted.
5. **The WORST gift you've ever received:** This isn't about being ungrateful- there is a lot to talk about when it comes to the worst gift ever. Was it thoughtless, or thoughtful and misguided? Did it live on through re-gifting or in a hysterical story? Bad gifts can have a great impact.
6. **Biggest accomplishment of the year:** Around the holidays, we reflect on our achievements over the year. What went right at your company? Give everyone a pat on the back by highlighting the year's biggest accomplishment.
7. **Things to strive for in the New Year:** As much as we look back at the holidays, we also look forward. Discuss the greatest challenge of the upcoming year, or how you want to top a successful year. Allow your audience to dream of next year's possibilities- very inspiring.



8. **A New Year's wish for your audience:** This can be personal OR work related. If you had one wish for your co-workers in the New Year, what would it be? Prosperity, love, peace, empowerment? Make a wish on behalf of your audience.
9. **Charity efforts you've undertaken:** The holidays are the season of giving, so inspire others to give by sharing how you give back. Tell them why you support the charities you do, how it makes you feel, and how you think it would make THEM feel to do the same.
10. **Charity efforts your company has undertaken:** Many times, people aren't aware of all of the goodwill efforts made by their company. Sharing the charitable work that your organization does as a whole can help everyone feel like they have contributed to more than just their job.

Receiving a Company Award (Beyond a sincere "thank you"!)

This your Oscar moment- what will you say? While "thank you's" are a priority, this is your time to shine and share a bit of yourself. Just as when an actor opens up in a personal way on an awards show, your audience will be pleased to get to know a bit about the fabulous person behind all of that success.

11. **How this will change you going forward:** Sharing how you will use the award to inspire you going forward shows not only your respect for the recognition itself, but your willingness to continue to work hard. Your audience will see someone who is always striving to be better.
12. **An award you won as a child (Sports? Educational? Arts?):** A childhood award may have helped to shape your development. What did it feel like when you won? Are there any similar feelings now? How does your childhood award compare with the current one you are receiving?
13. **How your peers played a part in your success:** Shining the spotlight on others shows what a gracious winner you are while acknowledging all of the hard work that went into this accomplishment. No person is an island, and chances are you had a lot of help along the way. Share how your peers went above and beyond.
14. **How you intend to use this award to help others:** Think about Miss America, using her title to bring attention to issues she cares about. How will you do that at your organization, or with your clients? What doors do you feel this will open for your department, company, or product? How do we all benefit from this award?
15. **The biggest mistake you made along the way:** Mistakes can be funny, difficult, or downright frightening. Share a time when you messed up on your way to this moment. Your audience will appreciate the humanity involved in making mistakes.



16. **The biggest success you had along the way:** Share that moment of pride when you felt it all come together. Don't think of it as bragging- making your audience feel the excitement of reaching that height of success can rouse them to their feet!
17. **Lessons you learned on your path to achievement:** Both success and failure can be great teachers. What was the big lesson you learned along the way? How did it change your path? How did your path change YOU? What was the biggest take away from your journey?
18. **The impact of this recognition:** Whether it made you jump for joy or made you weep with pride, how did this award impact you? Telling your audience what this means to you in a very specific way can help them feel the impact, too.
19. **In your book, who deserves an award as well?:** Once again, shining the spotlight on others but in a more specific sense. Like an actor thanking their long time acting coach, most success stories have someone responsible for it all. Let everyone know who your "Yoda" is, and what award you would give them.
20. **Lesson you learned in school that helped you achieve this goal:** Whether it's "don't cut corners" or "carry the one", often times the lessons of the schoolyard guide our adult lives. Share that childhood lesson or mantra, when you learned it, and how it helped you on the road to achievement.

Commencement Speech

The responsibilities inherent in giving a graduation speech can be daunting- after all, you're sending a bunch of young minds out to make their way in the world! Like the christening of a ship, you want to wish them a long, safe, adventure filled journey. How can you do that while still sharing yourself with the group?

21. **The best advice you've ever received:** What are the words that guide your life to this day? How have they helped you in times of trials or great joy? What are the words you feel it is imperative for them to hear?
22. **The worst advice you've ever received:** Often times, the worst advice you receive is the advice that drives you the most. Whether it was the coach that told you to give up, the person who made you stop pursuing your dream, or just the time your vacation was destroyed thanks to bad directions, we can learn a lot from how we respond to bad advice.
23. **What you were thinking on your own commencement day:** If you've been in the graduates' shoes, tell them how they felt to you. It can help your audience relate to you through their own experience, and comfort them by letting them know they're not alone.

24. **The day after you graduated:** What did it feel like the first day you woke up as a graduate? Did you avoid the world for a while? Did you dive in head first? Were you full of fear or ambition? And what did you do with those feelings?
25. **Your first day of school:** For most students, the last time they faced an academic transition as large as graduation was when they first walked into kindergarten. Share how you felt when you sat at those tiny desks for the first time. What would you tell your younger self?
26. **What your parents did on your commencement day:** They might have made you feel sentimental with their pride (or devastatingly embarrassed by it!) but chances are there was a parental figure that factored into your big day. Recognizing the adults in the audience and the sacrifices they made to get the graduates to that moment can unite everyone.
27. **How your prom/homecoming/alma mater song influenced your school years:** We bet you remember at least one of those songs- what do you think about when you hear it? Did you use it as a rallying cry, or a quiet, tender inspiration?
28. **The school activity you are most proud of:** Your audience can feel pride in their own accomplishments through the discussion of your proudest activity. Remind them that everyone has something they are good at, or some area where they shine.
29. **The school activity you wish you'd participated in:** Just like mistakes or bad advice, we learn a lot from regret. How can you inspire your audience to take on every opportunity by sharing a situation where you wish you had? What did you learn by missing out on that activity?
30. **How the graduates can make a difference immediately:** Offer them a suggestion- for example, "As a graduate, do one good deed this week. Work for a charity this summer. Pledge to help an undergraduate you left behind." Share a good deed that you intend to do immediately, and challenge them to do the same in their own way.

Use the Skills Actors Do for
Exceptional Presentations:
Download 5 FREE Techniques NOW!

Wedding Toast

The pressure can be on when you have to give a toast on someone else's big day. Striking the right tone and finding the right topic can be especially challenging. Remember, you wouldn't have been asked at all unless the couple had a special connection to YOU, so bring yourself to it! Incidentally, no one likes an inappropriate toast- keep it clean and classy.

31. **Your favorite memory with the bride/groom:** Sharing one perfect moment you all experienced together can give the guests a window into your special bond. Let everyone know how important the couple is to you by discussing your favorite memory.
32. **How you were asked to be part of the wedding party:** Perhaps that bride took you to dinner, or you were golfing with the groom. Where were you when you were invited to be a part of the festivities? How did you react? How have you prepared for their big day?
33. **What you learned on your own wedding day:** If you happen to be married, sharing some special insight that you gained on your wedding day can help the couple, as well as the audience, shape what the rest of the day may be.
34. **What qualities of the couple you try to emulate in your own life:** Perhaps they are great listeners, fierce truth-speakers, or great joke-tellers. Inevitably, we are inspired by some quality of our closest friends, so let the guests know what it is about the couple that you work to emulate in your day-to-day.
35. **I laughed the hardest with the bride/groom when _____ (keep it respectful!):** Again, bear in mind that someone's grandmother is probably in the room, but if you have a tale of hysterics to share, do it! Letting some humor shine through brings more joy to the day overall, and might help relax a jittery couple.
36. **I cried the hardest with the bride/groom when _____:** We bond through adversity as much as through joy. Perhaps the bride or groom overcame a great obstacle, or endured a loss, or rebuilt their lives in an unbelievable way. If you know the couple wouldn't mind you sharing, let the audience know about the time you cried together, and how it makes the happiness of their wedding day even greater.
37. **A movie/TV couple they newlyweds remind you of:** Are they Ross and Rachel? Sam and Diane? Cam and Mitch? What is it about them that reminds you of their entertainment counterparts? In what ways are they more successful than those fictional couples?
38. **A wedding tradition from your own heritage:** Jumping the broom, Celtic hand binding, Mehndi designs- every tradition means something in the specific ceremonies of its culture. Tell them about a ceremony from your own heritage that means a lot to you, and how you would like the spirit of that tradition to radiate on their big day.
39. **The moment you knew they would get married:** When did that light go off when you thought, "This is it for them!" Excite your audience by sharing that amazing moment when you knew your friend's life had forever changed.



40. **Your biggest wish for their life together:** Tell the couple what big wish you have for them, and why you wish it. Tell them how you intend to help make it come true, and how you want their guests to do the same. Get everyone involved in the journey.

Introducing a Co-worker at an Event

Make sure you have something to say when you're asked to be the opening act for a colleague. Even though they are the main event, picking a compelling topic can help the audience connect with your colleague- and you!- on a more personal level.

41. **The day you met:** First impressions are incredibly strong, and sharing what happened on the day you first met can help paint a picture of the rest of your business relationship. Perhaps your first impressions were off base, or so spot on you amazed yourself! Let the audience know.
42. **A fascinating fact about them (ie, their long commute, years of service, number of awards):** Everyone has a fun fact that makes them stand out- things like they roller-skate to work, or have held their job for 40 years, or they've read more Sherlock Holmes novels than anyone you know. That is interesting, compelling and humanizing information. Tell why this fact fascinates you.
43. **Qualities of theirs you would like to emulate:** More than just rambling off a list of good qualities, speaking about the specific qualities of the person that you would like to emulate personalizes things. It makes their best characteristics sound even better if you use them as an inspiration in your own life
44. **How they helped you with a difficult challenge:** Did they help you win a major account? Help you get a promotion? Support you while you quit smoking? Whatever the challenge, talk about how they helped you overcome it. Your audience can glean how they behave in more big-picture situations by learning about how they act one-on-one.
45. **A phrase they use that has inspired you:** Maybe they're the first one to say, "don't sweat the small stuff!" or "just keep swimming" when the going gets tough. How does their mantra help you at work? At home?
46. **A phrase they use that makes you laugh:** Audiences love to get to know someone through their sense of humor. What's the one thing your colleague can say to you that will crack you up every time? How do they embody that sense of humor? Remember, keep it clean and classy.
47. **How they are a leader day-to-day:** It's easy to outline someone's leadership qualities on an overall, corporate level, but how about on the smaller, day-to-day things? Does your colleague go out of his or her way to support struggling coworkers, or treat subordinates as peers, or make the office a more smooth and efficient place daily?



48. **An unrecognized good deed (that they wouldn't mind shared):** Once again, only share what you know they wouldn't mind everyone knowing, but if your colleague did a quiet good deed that has affected you, the office, or your community, share it. Maybe they spend their Saturdays cleaning a local park, or they treat the interns to lunch once a month, or they raise money by running for cancer research. Give them some well-deserved recognition.
49. **Their favorite sports team/ movie/song and how it impacts them:** You know the folks who live and die for their team's colors or can't go a day without quoting Bob Dylan. How does their "favorite" impact their life? How do you relate to your own "favorites" in a similar manner?
50. **A moment they eased a tough situation with humor:** We all appreciate the person who saves the day with a quick laugh. Whether at the annual conference or the Friday staff meeting, how did your colleague's quick wit- and cooler head- prevail, to everyone's benefit?

Giving a Eulogy

Delivering a eulogy can be an incredibly difficult task. The key is to speak from the heart about your personal experience with the person- let the guests see the deceased through your eyes. Sharing your experience can make the event less sterile and more personal.

51. **Your favorite memory of the person:** Letting your audience into a favorite moment can paint a vivid picture of someone who has passed. Perhaps it was a particularly raucous card game, and evening at the theatre, or a family dinner. Share what makes you smile.
52. **The last time you were together:** Were they vibrant and in good health? Was it difficult, but you were glad to see them? Did they share any words that the guests would find comforting? The last visit is always an important one.
53. **A gift from the person that you cherish:** By speaking about something that the deceased made a point of giving you, the guests can see you through their eyes. Tokens, large or small, that you cherish can tell the story of a lasting bond.
54. **How you will carry their memory on a daily basis:** How will you help them live on? What effort will you make to do things with their spirit or in their memory? Let everyone know the lasting impact they will have on you.
55. **Their charitable contributions:** How someone chooses to donate their time or money says a lot about a person. Speak about the charitable work that was important to the deceased, and mention how it affected you- whether in a direct or indirect way.
56. **What made them laugh the hardest:** If there was something that made the person laugh every time, there is a good chance that everyone might know about it. Bond

with your audience in joy rather than grief by sharing the thing that made them laugh the hardest, and how it brought you joy as well.

57. **How your children/spouse/friends were affected by the person:** Did they inspire you to work harder? To follow a dream? Did they ease a difficult personal burden? Speak directly about how you or your loved ones were changed by the deceased.
58. **What you would like to see your audience remember about the person:** Be their ambassador amongst the living. Tell the audience what YOU would like them to remember about this person, be it a physical quality or an emotional one. Describe it thoroughly so it will stick in the minds of your audience.
59. **A favorite holiday memory with the deceased:** Holidays tend to be the time when we gather with those we care about. What do you remember about the deceased at the holidays?
60. **The impact they had on their company/professional life:** We define so much of who we are by our career, so share how the person impacted their company or changed their profession. Do they inspire you to do the same in your field? Were you directly affected by their innovations or actions?

Opening a conference

Just like the warm-up performer on a talk show, the opening speech at a conference sets the tone for the entire event. It can be an overwhelming request, but much more manageable when you bring yourself into the mix.

61. **What you thought when you were asked to speak:** Tell your audience about your reaction to the invitation to speak- were you frightened, and then excited? What was the deciding factor that made you accept the offer?
62. **The moment you're looking forward to the most:** Excite, inspire, or energize your audience by telling them what YOU can't wait to do/see/or hear more about. Even if the audience members are looking forward to something else, your anticipation of a great conference will shine through.
63. **What you thought after last year's conference:** Perhaps last year was a notorious flop. Maybe it was a resounding success. Regardless, how you felt after last year's conference surely influenced your outlook on this year's conference.
64. **How last year's conference changed your year:** What did you take away from last year's event? Did a product or idea drastically change your year? Did the discoveries made color your business?
65. **How last year's conference changed your audience's year:** Tell your audience about how last year's event inevitably changed their lives, and how you feel it, too. Empower your audience to learn even more this year.



66. **What childhood wishes are being solved by this conference:** Is your company unveiling something amazing at this particular conference that you dreamed about as a child? (Flying cars? Faster phones?) Discuss what your childhood wish was, and how the conference is going to make it come true.
67. **The moment you knew your company was special:** What was the defining career moment for you at your company? When did you know that you truly worked somewhere special? Let your audience know what led to that discovery.
68. **The phrase your team uses for motivation:** Rally the crowd with the cry your team uses to get moving! Tell them why it motivates your team to innovate, and how they can adopt it for themselves.
69. **Promises kept from last year's conference:** Remind everyone the ways that last year's conference fulfilled its expectations, and tell them how that success makes you feel. Inspire them to look forward to the promises that will be kept from this event.
70. **The biggest laugh of last year's conference:** Did the CEO make a hilarious video presentation? Was an important demo presentation saved with some well-placed humor? Share that with your audience, and how it changed the outcome/ set the tone for the conference.

Are you making these mistakes?
Find out the 5 Common Mistakes that
Undermine Professionalism HERE!

Ribbon cutting/opening ceremony

When speaking at the opening of something new, you are tasked with building the excitement and anticipation of the audience for the business, building, restaurant, etc. Missing that opportunity can result in a slow or underwhelming first day. Set the right tone from the start!

71. **Your favorite product from the business:** Share why you are a fan of the establishment, and get your audience ready to enjoy their products themselves! Speak about what makes the quality of that product different from the rest.
72. **How the community will benefit:** Will the business bring new jobs? Refurbish an abandoned space? Involve young people and old alike? Discuss how the business is a win/win for the community.
73. **How you will support the business as it grows:** It will help inspire your audience to support the new business if you let them know how you will do the same. Will it be financial support, word of mouth, or both? Will you hang posters for the business or book events in their venue? Put yourself in the picture.

74. **How others can use this business as an example/ inspiration to start their own:** The story of how this business got off the ground can ignite a fire under folks thinking of starting their own businesses. Tell your audience how you witnessed the dream become a reality.
75. **The need you have for their product/ services:** Have you been dying for a new nail salon? Are you desperately in need of a local tech place to fix your off- crashing computer? Are you in the market for a new car, and the dealership opening has just what you are looking for? Create the need for those listening.
76. **How other local businesses will benefit:** Perhaps the ice cream shop will benefit from the traffic at the new pizza place, or the coffee shop might see a bump from the new post-movie crowd. Tie it all together for everyone.
77. **The best qualities of the new owners:** What is it that you like about the new owners? Introduce them to their new community by sharing their best qualities with your listeners. Tell them why those qualities matter to you.
78. **How it could positively affect the environment/ public health:** Benefits of new business can go beyond the financial. Share how it may help the planet , or assist in making people healthier. Everyone can get behind that!
79. **The potential you see for their business growth:** Think the new dress shop might make a great starting point for a pedestrian mall? Sharing your vision for improvement can inspire your audience to give their support and see the community grow!
80. **Three people you know who have been affected by their product/ services:** If you know someone who has been personally affected by this business or service (and you are certain they wouldn't mind you sharing their stories) tell your audience. Help put a human face on the business even beyond your own experience.

Speaking at a religious service

While religious services call for the utmost respect and consideration, that doesn't mean that you shouldn't share anything personal (or funny!). Sharing yourself at a religious service can help deepen the community's connection to their faith by putting very human face on the experience.

81. **How the religious community supported you as a child:** Growing up, how did this community make a difference in your life? How did they help you grow into the person you are?
82. **How the religious community supported you as an adult:** Discuss ways that the religious community has helped you in recent memory. Let your audience know how they got you through a difficult time or made your success possible.



83. **How your beliefs helped you make a difficult decision:** What pillars of your faith did you turn to when you needed help? Was there a certain thought, story, or mantra that helped you through? How were you changed by that idea?
84. **In your book, what member of the community exemplifies your faith?:** Often, there is someone in our lives you we feel is the embodiment of our faith. Share who you feel that is, what it is about them that makes you think so, and how you feel they live their faith every day.
85. **The moment you questioned your faith:** Being vulnerable and sharing a dark moment when you questioned everything can comfort your audience in their own difficulties. Discuss your own humanity by talking about a time you struggled.
86. **The moment your faith was strengthened:** Was there a moment when your faith was solidified? Was it an act, an event, or an emotion? How did you grow in your faith because of that moment?
87. **If you are of another faith/non-religious, what is a secular practice you relate to the religious community?:** Even if you don't belong to a specific religion personally you can bring a lot to a speech at a religious service. Discuss the secular qualities of the faith (honesty, love, charity, acceptance) that move you in your own life.
88. **How does your faith inspire you on a daily basis?:** Speak about how you live your faith every day. Share the little, daily ways that you try to exemplify your faith and what kind of person that effort has made you.
89. **How would you improve relations between those of different faiths? Between the religious/nonreligious?:** Building stronger relationships is an important topic in any setting. Expound upon your ideas for making interfaith (or the religious/nonreligious) relations better. Offer what you personally will do to make a difference.
90. **If someone is being honored, discuss how they helped you grow in your own beliefs:** How did the honored person make YOU a better person? How did their faith inspire you? How will you try to pass their efforts to others?

First day on the job

Introducing yourself to a group of new co-workers should go way beyond "Hello, my name is...". Meeting your new team can be intimidating, so it's imperative that you have something prepared to say! Be sure to spend some time thinking about how you want your co-workers to feel. (Excited? Inspired? Empowered?)

91. **Your first day of work ever:** Maybe you were a teenager when you clocked in at a job for the first time. How did it make you feel? How is this day similar? How has your career changed since then?

92. **Your first day at your last job:** Connect your new team with your old one by telling them a bit about the day you left. Share how important those relationships were to you, and how you are looking forward to building new ones that are just as strong.
93. **Your 100 day plan for your team:** Hit the ground running! Just like the President, inspire your team about the time ahead by telling them what you see in their near future. Gear them up to do a great job!
94. **The accomplishment you wish you'd made at your last job:** What was the one thing you couldn't achieve at your last post, but truly wanted to? What did you learn from falling short of that goal? How will you make things different with your new team?
95. **The worst first encounter ever:** Break the ice by sharing your worst first impression story. No doubt you'll get some "I've been there!" chuckles. Especially if you are a higher-up this can help you connect with your team on an even playing field.
96. **A word or phrase your team will use for inspiration/amusement:** Give your team their new mantra right away! Let them start to build on it and make it their rallying cry. Tell them what that phrase means to you.
97. **Your biggest fear about your new position:** Level with them by sharing your biggest fear. What do you need their help with? What challenge will you need to face together? How do you need their support?
98. **Your greatest wish for your first year together:** What is your greatest hope for this new group? Let them know, and set them on a path to achieving it. Tell them why you wish it for them.
99. **An office tradition you'd like to start:** Bagel staff meetings? Thursday "town hall" events? Monthly roundtables in your office? Share a new tradition you'd like to launch.
100. **How you found inspiration for speech topics from a great list!:** Please share the wealth! Team Ovation is glad to help you, and those you know, with your professional skills. Tell them where you found this list!

Get 7 Successful Strategies for Conquering
"Dry Content" [HERE!](#)

