

these gems of wisdom whenever they come one's way.

A good text does not come about without hard work. All good speeches need to be edited and polished. Mark Twain once said, 'It takes me three weeks to make an impromptu speech.' The first draft is very often off the top of one's head. Ideally, one should allow a cooling-off period of one or two days before looking at the draft again. Flaws in the draft, such as long words and disjointed sentences, will become more apparent. That is the time to do the editing and polishing.

Deftly delivered

Speeches are like babies, very easy to conceive but very hard to deliver.

To help with the delivery, the speaker can rely on either a verbatim script or speaking notes, or can simply memorise the text. If one is addressing a large audience on a formal occasion, every single word is important. It is therefore always good to have a prepared text to help get the message across. In fact, except for very light occasions, Churchill almost never spoke off the cuff. As for speaking from memory, unless one has a photographic

memory, the need to concentrate on regurgitating the text may detract from one's delivery of the speech.

The best tactic is to use the approach that one feels most comfortable with or that gives one most confidence. Practice is essential in order not to let people feel the speaker is not fully prepared. When speaking, one should not keep looking down at the text every single moment. To get the message effectively across, it is vital for the speaker to have frequent eye contact with the audience.

When it is necessary to read a text, the trick to maintaining interest is to make it sound as if one was not reading from a prepared text. In oral delivery, one does not have the benefit of the use of capital letters, bold types or underlines to emphasise a particular point. So, one should never read a speech in a monotone but should vary the voice, have different pace of speaking and make the right pause.

In sum, if one is true to oneself and one's conviction, if one is honest and speaks from the heart, if one has a good grasp of the language and puts in hard work doing the editing and polishing, one will have no difficulty in turning out a decent speech.

True or False?

'WAR IS PEACE
FREEDOM IS SLAVERY
IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH' (1984, George Orwell)

George Orwell (1903-50), English novelist and essayist, is noted for his satirical novels *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949). In *1984*, he depicts life in Oceania, an authoritarian state under the control of the Party. Quoted above are the three slogans of the Party, which establishes its absolute authority by annihilation of human nature.

Each of the three slogans contains two contradictory ideas. It is virtually illogical. If the first part of it is true, the latter part can hardly be. Such a rhetorical device is called 'paradox'.



Nonsensical a paradox may appear, however, one can often find some truth in it. 'War is Peace' may reflect the reality that in the old days, disputes tended to end in wars, which in turn brought peace. 'Freedom is Slavery' can be taken to mean that when you are totally free, you may become the slave of your unbridled desires. 'Ignorance is Strength' can be construed as a secret of success since being ignorant will sometimes be the best way of surviving. Of course, what exactly the three paradoxical slogans mean is open to interpretation.



We may come across such paradoxes in daily conversation as well. For example, 'Paul is always such a happy man. To him, *heaven is a place on earth.*' Sometimes, paradox can be used to create a comic effect: 'The more you earn, the more you spend. The more you spend, the less you save. The less you save, the less you keep. So, what's the point in working hard to earn?'

Another example of paradox — 'less is more' enjoys a high profile in the mass media. It is a favourite in newspaper and journal headlines, and is used to cover a wide range of topics from trimming the overstuffed school curriculum to the beauty of classically simple interior design. Putting it the other way round, Barry Schwartz, a renowned psychologist, named his new book *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less*. In it he aptly points out that consumers jaded by too much choice today are now looking for ways to reduce the time spent figuring out what to buy. A clever twist, isn't it?