

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT TIPS

1. Most book-related events follow this format: Someone introduces the author, the author speaks, the audience is invited to ask questions, and then the author signs books. The whole event usually lasts one to two hours.
2. Before any event, think about three to five main points you want to communicate to the audience and design your presentation accordingly. This is extremely important for TV and radio where you have very little time.
3. Have an outline for your presentation. Include an introduction explaining who you are and why you wrote the book, a section with anecdotes about yourself, the book, or about writing it, a section where you read a short passage, and an ending that allows time for questions.
4. Practice your presentation! It should be about 20 to 30 minutes long. Practicing also helps prevent nervousness.
5. A booksigning or speech is a performance. Be calm and natural but keep in mind that through your presentation and the following questions, you are subtly trying to convince the audience to buy your book. If you are personable and funny and the audience enjoys the event, they are likely to buy your book.
6. If you plan to read a passage from your book, preselect the section and mark the beginning and end with sticky notes that will be easy for you to find.
7. Select a short passage. You want the audience alert and interested, not almost asleep because you have read for too long. Be prepared to read for about five minutes, if at all. You can read more than one passage but make sure that together they are not too long.
8. Select a passage that gives a good idea of what the book is about, but don't give everything away. If you tell the audience exactly what is in the book, they won't need to buy it!
9. Anticipate the audience's questions. Be prepared to answer questions like, "Why did you write this book?" or "What was your research like?"
10. If you don't understand a question, ask the person to rephrase the question until you understand it. If you have to say "I don't know," say it with confidence.
11. Be prepared for anything! Each event is different and each crowd is different. It is important to adjust your presentation at the last minute to suit a given situation. If you are all set to read a portion of your book and the audience just wants to ask you questions, then drop the reading and answer questions.
12. Be prompt, be courteous, be clean.