YOUR JOURNEY TO THE STAGE

Your voice. Your preparation. Your moment. OGCPS is an opportunity to discover what you can do, learn from others and grow as a communicator. Use this guide as a workbook, not a script: adapt each exercise to your contest and your own speaking style.

1 Choose your contest and understand the challenge

- International Speech: Share one meaningful message through an original, well-structured speech. Aim to move, inform or inspire your listeners.
- Humorous Speech: Find the funny side of a relatable experience. Build a complete speech with a clear beginning, development and satisfying ending.
- Speech Evaluation: Listen to a test speech, identify what worked and suggest improvements that are specific, respectful and useful.
- Table Topics (Impromptu Speaking): Respond to an unfamiliar question with a clear idea, relevant support and a purposeful conclusion.

2 Set a goal that you control

Rather than focusing only on a trophy, choose two skills you want to strengthen: perhaps an engaging opening, a calmer pace, better eye contact or a stronger conclusion. Write them down and check your progress after each rehearsal.

My preparation goals
1. The skill I want to improve: _____
2. How I will practise it: _____
3. Who can give me constructive feedback: _____

3 Know the rules before you rehearse

Read the official OGCPS 2027 Contest Rulebook and your contestant briefing. Confirm your category, eligibility, originality requirements, timing, use of props or notes, speaking order and the procedures for your venue. Your Gavel Club Counsellor can help you clarify questions.

Remember: A contest is not about copying an admired speaker. The most memorable performance begins with a message that sounds like you.

PREPARE, PRACTISE & IMPROVE

Strong speakers are made through purposeful rehearsal. Practise one skill at a time, then bring everything together in a full performance.

4 Build a speech that listeners can follow

- Opening: Begin with a vivid moment, question, surprising observation or short story that connects to your central message.
- Body: Develop two or three clear points. Use specific details and examples rather than long explanations.
- Ending: Return to your main idea and leave the audience with one thought they will remember.
- Humour: Use authentic situations, contrast and timing. Let the audience laugh; avoid humour that embarrasses or targets others.

5 Practise the delivery, not just the words

- Voice: Vary pace, volume and emphasis. Pause after an important sentence rather than rushing to fill silence.
- Body language: Stand with balance, use natural gestures and move only when movement supports the message.
- Connection: Look at different parts of the audience. Speak to people, not at the floor or your notes.
- Timing: Rehearse with a stopwatch and the appropriate timing signals; leave room for pauses and audience response.

6 Two short exercises for every Gavelier

Exercise A — One message, three ways: Explain the same idea in 20 seconds, 60 seconds and 2 minutes. Notice what is essential.

Exercise B — Record and review: Watch one rehearsal without sound to notice posture and gestures; then listen without watching to notice pace, pauses and clarity.

7 Special practice for Evaluation and Table Topics

Evaluation: After a practice speech, write two observable strengths and two actionable suggestions. Explain why each suggestion would help the speaker. Practise organising your evaluation with a warm opening and clear conclusion.

Table Topics: Ask a friend for an unexpected prompt. Take a brief moment to think, state your main point, support it with a reason or example, and finish decisively. Try different approaches; no single formula fits every topic.

YOUR 14-DAY PRACTICE PLAN

Fourteen days is enough to build useful habits when your practice is consistent. Adjust the plan if you have more or less time before your contest.

8 Your 14-day preparation plan

Days	What to do
14–12	Read rules; select your focus; outline or collect practice prompts.
11–10	Develop your opening, central message and conclusion; practise aloud.
9–8	Record one full attempt; identify two changes that matter most.
7–6	Rehearse for your counsellor or peers; request specific feedback.
5–4	Practise delivery, timing signals, transitions and recovery from mistakes.
3	Run a realistic rehearsal without stopping or restarting.
2	Refine lightly; prepare materials; confirm venue and reporting instructions.
1	Do a gentle practice; rest, hydrate and prepare for the next day.

9 After each rehearsal: your self-check

- ☐ My main idea was easy to understand.
- ☐ My opening gained attention and my ending felt complete.
- ☐ My voice, pauses and gestures supported my message.
- ☐ I stayed within the required contest time.
- ☐ I responded to feedback and improved one specific skill.

10 Ask for feedback that helps

Instead of asking “Was it good?”, ask: “Where did you lose interest?”, “Which sentence stayed with you?”, or “What one change would make this clearer?” Choose feedback that supports your purpose; you do not need to use every suggestion.

My next improvement: _____
How I will test it: _____

YOUR CONTEST-DAY COMPANION

Your contest day is the chance to share what you have prepared. Focus on communicating with the audience—not on delivering every word perfectly.

11 Before you arrive

- ☐ Check the reporting time, venue, category and contestant instructions.
- ☐ Review the rules and any required forms or identification.
- ☐ Bring water and permitted materials; check whether notes or props are allowed.
- ☐ Sleep well, eat normally and allow enough travel time.
- ☐ Warm up gently: breathe, stretch, articulate a few phrases and smile.

12 In the contest room

- Listen carefully to the Contest Chair and officials; follow the instructions for your category.
- Observe timing lights or signals without staring at the timer.
- If you lose your place, pause, reconnect with your main idea and continue.
- In Evaluation and Table Topics, follow the preparation and isolation procedures explained at the briefing.
- Respect other contestants, the audience, judges and volunteers.

13 Handle nerves with a simple routine

Before your turn: Breathe in gently, exhale slowly, feel your feet on the floor and recall your opening idea. As you begin: Look at one friendly face and speak your first sentence at a deliberate pace. During your speech: Let pauses work for you. A moment of silence is not a failure.

14 After you speak

Thank the experience, whatever the result. When appropriate, reflect on what you communicated well, what surprised you and what you would try differently next time. Celebrate fellow Gaveliers: encouragement and sportsmanship are part of the championship.

My three reflections
Something I did well: _____
Something I learned: _____
One step I will take after OGCPS: _____

“Your progress is measured not only by the result, but by the courage to prepare, speak and grow.”

Reference: Toastmasters International, Speech Contest Rulebook 2026–2027 and Brand Manual.
The official OGCPS rules and contestant briefing take precedence.