

Guidelines for Speakers at Awana clubs and activities

Thank you for agreeing to speak at an Awana event; we appreciate your willingness to serve. The message you present will make an impact for eternity in the lives of your listeners! Here are some suggestions to help you get ready:

Pray about your opportunity. Pray that the Lord will allow you to make the most of the moment, as you have the privilege and responsibility to present the truths of God's Word.

Know your audience. Awana clubbers range in age from preschool Cubbies through High School students; you are also speaking to their adult leaders and possibly to their parents or other family members. Ask the person who invited you to describe your listeners.

Prepare your message. Read and study so that you know the message you will present without memorizing or excessive referring to notes. Use one or two Bible passages and emphasize one main truth. You should be able to summarize your message in one sentence.

Prepare yourself. Ask about appropriate dress; an Awana uniform or shirt is always okay. Arrive early and let the organizers know you are ready. Check the sound system or other audiovisual equipment. Relax and let the Lord work through you.

Use your Bible. Our clubbers and their families need to know about the Lord Jesus Christ. Carry your Bible and make it clear that your message is from the Scriptures.

Be interesting. Jesus taught using stories and object lessons; you should too. Whatever subject you decide to talk about, make sure it ties in with the Bible. Don't speak too long; the average Awana clubber has an attention span of 12 minutes. Be enthusiastic in your words and gestures!

Pray about your impact. Close in prayer, and continue to pray after you are done speaking. An invitation to trust Christ is always appropriate if done Biblically.

We appreciate your involvement in our Awana clubbers lives. Please let us know how we can help you be more effective in your message.

So You're Going to Speak at Awana!

Congratulations! Being asked to speak at an Awana club or event is an honor. These boys and girls are precious to us, and speakers are selected carefully. Through your message, some of our clubbers may receive Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Here are some suggestions to help you prepare.

Learn About the Boys and Girls

Consider the age of those in your audience. Gear your message to that level. Here are the Awana age divisions:

- Sparks — kindergarten- through second-grade boys and girls
- Truth & Training — third- through sixth- grade boys and girls
- Trek 24/7 — seventh- and eighth-grade guys and girls
- Journey 24/7 — high-school guys and girls

Choose Your Topic

Ask the commander if your message should follow a specific theme. If not, perhaps some of these categories will be helpful:

The existence of God	The Trinity
Jesus Christ — who He is, what He did for us	Christian stories for boys and girls
The attributes of God	Creation
The Bible — what it teaches, how we received it	Personal experiences
Salvation	Sin and death
Stories about Bible characters	Object lessons
	Separation from God

Share Your Message

The Bible should be the basis for your message. Practice so you know the length of your message. An appropriate length would be 10-12 minutes.

After you are introduced at the meeting, greet the children and ask them to put their handbooks under their chairs. Begin with prayer. Smile, use good eye contact, and relax; you have prayed about your message and prepared well. Now trust the Lord to speak through you. Teach in love and explain doctrines simply. Use Christian terminology carefully. Some of these boys and girls have never been to church. If clubbers have questions, you can either answer them as you go along or wait until the end of the message. But remember to involve clubbers in what you're saying to hold their interest.

Our goal is to see unsaved boys and girls receive Jesus Christ and saved boys and girls challenged to serve Him. An invitation to respond to the gospel is always in order, but keep your invitation clear. If you choose, ask clubbers interested in learning more about salvation to raise their hands during prayer. Be sure that you or one of the leaders later talk to those who respond. Never imply that the boys and girls can be saved simply by raising their hands.

Presenting the Message — an Impact for Eternity

Most Awana leaders agree that preparing Bible message material is important. But too many leaders neglect to give much thought to preparing for the presentation. The impact of a well-prepared message is lost because of inadequate delivery.

How can speakers improve presentations? Here are some factors to consider:

Before speaking — Practice your message. If you've properly prepared your message, you should have the content under control. But knowing the content and presenting it are often two very different things! "My mind went blank! I forgot what to say next!" You can avoid this experience through practice. Rehearse on your feet at a time and place that assures no interruptions. When you rehearse, use your Bible and notes just as you will in club. Speak as if the clubbers are listening. Employ body language, different voices and facial expressions. Time your message. If it's not the right length, revise it. As you're practicing, you become more and more familiar with your material. But don't memorize your message word-for-word; that will make it sound canned. Just know the material well and have good notes to follow.

Be appropriately groomed — A neat appearance will make you more appealing to your audience. Avoid extremes in apparel or styles. They draw undue attention to yourself. An Awana leader, of course, should be wearing his or her complete Awana uniform.

Check the room — Although you may not be primarily responsible for preparing the meeting room, check it and make needed adjustments. The room should be clean with chairs arranged in rows. There must be adequate lighting, the thermostat should be set at a comfortable temperature and there should be proper ventilation. (Remember that a room full of people will warm up several degrees.)

Check your equipment — Have any equipment or objects you plan to use located for your convenience.

During Speaking

Be interesting — Talk in an interesting manner. Don't mumble, shout, speak listlessly or speak in a monotone. Adjust your voice to what you're saying. If the action is fast, talk rapidly. If there is sadness in a story, speak slowly in a sorrowful tone. Vary the pitch of your voice from high to low. Resist the temptation to use "oh's" and "ah's." They don't communicate anything!

Employ effective gestures — Learn to use your hands naturally and easily. Watch to see how good speakers use their hands to emphasize a point or help describe motion or action. Don't fidget. Fidgeting distracts the listeners' attention. Don't put your hands in your pockets, scratch your ears, straighten your clothes or adjust your glasses. If you're speaking from behind a lectern, don't lean on it. You may also distract your audience by holding chalk, glasses or other objects in your hands. Only hold an object when you're using it to make a point. Don't stand as if you're frozen to the spot. Change your position slightly to help emphasize a point, but don't pace back and forth like a caged lion. Stand with your feet fairly close together. And don't shift your weight from one leg to another. Movement of your feet, just as movement of your hands, should be done to help make a point in your message.

Keep eye contact with your audience — Slowly move your eyes from person to person, pausing long enough to let each one know you're looking him or her straight in the eye. If someone does not appear to be listening, you can regain his or her attention with eye contact. Clubbers are more likely to listen if they know you're looking at them.

After Speaking

Evaluate the message. What were the good and bad points? Were the clubbers interested? Were there discipline problems? (Discipline problems occur most often when the speaker is uninteresting. Sometimes, however, clubbers are disruptive regardless of how interesting the message is.) What can you do to improve before you speak again?

In making your evaluation, don't stress the clubbers' response to the invitation. Excellent deliveries, on the other hand, are not always followed by a response. If your choice of subject, preparation and presentation were prayerfully done to the best of your ability, you've discharged your responsibility. God is the One who gives the results.

File your message notes. Make additions or corrections to your message while it's fresh in your mind. Then file the message with a note indicating when and where you used it. You may have a chance to reuse a message, and you can build a collection which will be helpful in the future.

Giving Your Testimony

Your testimony can be an effective and powerful evangelistic tool. Telling others about how God has changed your life can be the ‘salt and light’ to cause them to want to know more about trusting Christ.

Here are some guidelines for giving your testimony at Awana or in your church. Your audience should understand that you are excited about the changes God has made in your life!

- Be brief and concise. Limit the details (names, places, etc). Emphasize what you want people to remember.
- Highlight one aspect of your Christian experience. Talk more about your current Christian life than your life before being saved.
- Use one or two verses that you can easily memorize or read.
- Don’t dwell on your life or associations before you trusted Christ. Be positive and enthusiastic about your current Christian experience!
- Avoid using terms that could confuse other people who are not Christians: “born again” “saved” “redeemed” “justified”. Talk about Christ changing your life.

Consider the following points to cover in your testimony:

Before I became a Christian:

- How I would describe my outlook on life:
- What was my attitude towards God?
- What did I think about spiritual things and church?
- What did I care about, think about, worry about?
- What problems did I have?
- What was most important in my life?
- What made me happy?

But then, I trusted Christ:

- What led up to my experience?
- What changed my mind?
- How and when did this happen?
- Who did God use to tell me the gospel?

Since I have been a Christian:

- How has my life, attitudes, actions, outlook changed?
- Did everything get better all at once?
- How would I describe my life today:

Storytelling

Telling stories is a great way to teach spiritual truths to kids without them knowing they are getting a lesson. They think they're just having fun! Good storytelling is an art, but one that may be mastered by anyone who makes an effort to understand the fundamentals.

A story has four parts:

1. Introduction
2. Body
3. Climax
4. Conclusion

Grasp your listeners' attention in the introduction. If you don't have their interest there, you may never get it! Fit sentences and descriptions to the clubbers' abilities and interests. Be short and concise. Introduce the main character and the problem he or she faces. The problem that exists between the hero and his goals is essential. Without a problem, there is no story.

For example, in the introduction of the Bible account of David and Goliath, briefly depict the life of the young shepherd. Then characterize the giant as ugly, mean and disrespectful, posing a great threat to the Hebrew nation. David had a problem. He knew that Goliath must be overcome to rid the land of this terrible threat.

Next, launch into the body of the story. Enlarge on the problem. Show the barriers David must overcome. Carefully weave into the story the thread of God helping David at all times.

In this story, David first faces the barrier of his brothers' anger. Then King Saul ridicules David's youth and inexperience. Another obstacle arises when Saul puts his armor on David. These complications hinder David as he tries to accomplish his goals. Finally, David goes into action, armed only with a sling and five smooth stones. His case looks hopeless – a mere shepherd boy against a well-armed giant.

All this action in the body of the story points toward the climax. Here, the suspense reaches its greatest point, the peak of interest for which the listeners have been waiting. Will David's aim be true? Will the giant destroy the brave shepherd boy? Make the most of this climax. Then present the conclusion briefly, yet completely enough to satisfy all the questions that may arise in a young mind.

Every story should have a moral or an application. When this is true, let the story speak for itself as much as possible. Don't underestimate your listeners! It is surprising how young minds discover hidden truths. When your listeners dig out the application or moral on their own, they are more likely to make it part of their lives. But on the other hand, never pass up opportunities to make a practical application when the story is lacking in this respect. If you feel the application is inadequate or likely to be misunderstood, then it is your responsibility to reinforce the application

so the scriptural truths will not be lost.

Words as Tools

Words are the tools you use to tell the story. Choose the words with care. Give them their fullest meaning, adding zest and color to the tale. In the story of David and Goliath, which of the following would interest a child more: "The giant looked at David and said or "The towering giant glared at David and roared in a great rumbling voice. The answer is obvious.

Pack the story full of color. Children love it. Occasionally, you may coin a word or two not found in the standard dictionary. But what does it matter as long as children grasp the meaning? Use vivid language: "David set the stone in his sling and flung it, zippity-zingo, straight at the giant's head!"

Usually you should tell a story from the hero's point of view. Sometimes, however, a switch makes the story more interesting. How would a lion tell the story of Daniel in the lions' den? Perhaps the dove might tell about Noah's ark. Storytellers have license to change the viewpoints, and children love these approaches!

Story Sources

The Bible is a gold mine of fascinating stories. Tell one story each week in Council Time for years, and you'll still have many waiting to be told.

Then, there's life itself. Everything is a story to an observant person. You can discover stories in trees, insects, birds, animals, and people. Carry a little notebook for jotting down interesting material. Consider how to relate your illustrations to the Bible truths which boys and girls need to learn.

A conscientious, consecrated storyteller reaps many rewards. Not the least of these is the joy of seeing children's faces reflect interest and enjoyment. Meanwhile, you know they are absorbing practical lessons which will draw them closer to the Lord. With every story comes the possibility of leading a child to Christ. And what greater reward than this could any storyteller ask?

Questions Clubbers Ask

The basic reason for Council Time is to meet the spiritual needs of clubbers. Do you know the needs of your clubbers? A group of fifth- and sixth-grade boys was asked to write questions they had about the Bible and the Christian life. This is what they asked:

What should you do if you get punished by your parents when you didn't do anything wrong?

- If a person has a bad habit, how can he get rid of it?
- Is it wrong for a Christian boy to accept a challenge for a fight?
- What do you say when your school teacher talks about evolution?
- When should dating start for a Christian?

- Is it wrong for Christians to go to the movies?
- How are you supposed to know God's will for your life?
- What should you do if your parents get a divorce?
- How do you know the Bible is true?
- How much time should a Christian be involved in sports?
- Is it wrong to kiss a girl if you really like her?

Some clubs have a steady diet of salvation messages week after week. Although the salvation emphasis is of utmost importance, Christian clubbers also need teaching from the Word on how to grow spiritually and share their Christian beliefs. You, as a leader, are responsible to discover what questions clubbers want answered. Then, seek to answer these questions from God's Word.

To learn what clubbers are thinking about, talk with individual boys and girls before and after club and in Handbook Time. Visit clubbers' homes. Provide a question box for clubbers. Hand out a list of questions and ask them to check the ones they'd like to hear discussed. (Clubbers will be more honest if their identity is not required.)

Don't spend time on discussion questions every week. Rather, schedule a short series or an occasional question-answer time. This provides variety in your programming and meets the specific needs of your clubbers.

Some club directors are hesitant about devoting a message to the subject of boy-girl relationships. Each clubber, however, should realize that not only does God have a plan for his or her individual life, but He has standards for his or her behavior, too. Awana may be the only place where clubbers will be taught these standards in proper biblical perspective.