

# ASK a writer

## SPEECH WRITING

For Key Stages 3  
Ages 11-14

- Writing & editing a speech
- Identifying personal politics
- Counter-arguments



**MINISTRY  
OF STORIES**

# Ask a writer **SPEECH WRITING**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Every year, Ministry of Stories takes young people to the Houses of Parliament to deliver speeches on issues they care about. The strongest speeches are always those that connect with the audience, not just through persuasive language but through feeling and conviction. For us, speechwriting is not just about using techniques but about discovering personal politics and how to voice them.

This pack is for teachers and facilitators, to help you support young people to write and edit speeches. The activities go with a video in which Alaz, a writer at Ministry of Stories, talks about how he wrote and delivered his speech.

Watch the video here: [youtu.be/NY-R5n2-hEg](https://youtu.be/NY-R5n2-hEg)

The activities in Part 1 will help participants find an issue they want to speak about.

Part 2 is a hand-out that will help participants identify speech writing techniques by looking at an example speech and notes from an editor.

## **PART 1** **FINDING** **YOUR** **ISSUE**

### **Where do you stand?**

- Pin up a 0 at one end of the room and a 10 at the other end. 10 is 'I totally agree', 0 is 'I totally disagree'. 5 is neutral.
- Say a series of statements and ask participants to stand in the place 'where they stand' on that issue.

Use a mix of serious and playful statements:

'Salt and vinegar is the best crisp flavour'

'There should be more age restrictions on video games'

'The UK should introduce the death penalty for serious crimes'

- Ask one person at each end, and one person somewhere in the middle, why they are standing there. Make space for all opinions here: we don't argue, we just speak and listen.

### **Local, National, Global**

- Put up three pieces of paper, marked Local, National and Global.
- Ask participants: What would you like to change, in your school or neighbourhood, in your country, in the world?
- Ask them to write each of their answers on a post-it note, and then pin it where they think it belongs – is it Local, National or Global?
- Read out some examples in each category
- Give participants the opportunity to read all the examples and choose the one that is most important to them. Ask them to write this down in an 'I believe' statement.

### **Issues our writers chose**

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'I believe  
the school day  
should be shorter'

'I believe  
there are too many  
pressures on young  
people to be  
perfect'

'I believe  
that governments  
should act together  
to stop civil war'

## Personal Stories

When we first ask our participants, 'Do you have a personal story about your issue?', we find they often say no.

We never push them to share a story they don't want to, but we do help them to understand that their own experiences - however small - do count as personal stories.

A personal story is not always our own story. It could be someone else's story - someone we know personally (if we have permission to share it), or a story we have read or heard about.

Encourage your participants to discuss:  
'What is a personal story?'

## Examples of personal stories

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'I am here to talk about how women don't feel safe walking around being who they are [...] I was walking down the street with my friends. A lot of men were looking at us. As if we know them. Then a man shouted at us saying stuff in a sexual way. Then we started to walk quickly...'

**Buse**

'Today I am going to be speaking about the stress put onto students in school. I picked this topic because it affects me on a personal level. I feel under pressure in school because there is too much emphasis on exams and homework that stops us from enjoying learning.'

**Zilan**

## **PART 2** **WHAT** **MAKES** **A GOOD** **SPEECH?**

This section is accompanied by a video of Alaz talking about writing and performing his speech: [youtu.be/NY-R5n2-hEg](https://youtu.be/NY-R5n2-hEg)

Below is a draft of Alaz's speech. Take a look and discuss:

- What he does well
- What techniques he uses
- What would make the next draft better?

Hello, my name is Alaz. Today I am going to be talking about racism. I believe that racism should end and that people should stop insulting people by their race.

Would you want racism to end?

I feel extremely annoyed and upset about this.

Some people say that a little bit of racism never hurt anyone, but I say that racism always hurts.

Some people say that white people are better than black people, and some people say black people are better than white people, but everyone in this world is equal and deserves to be treated as equal.

People who are racist always say racism doesn't exist, but you never know unless you have experienced being racially assaulted.

Matthew Kincaid attended his first anti-racism workshop when he was fourteen years old. At the time he did not realize how profound an impact it would have on his life.

I believe that all schools should have anti-racism workshops to educate students about racism.

We need to make a change because it can't carry on. It will be difficult but it's never impossible.

Here are our editor's thoughts on this draft of Alaz's speech:

Strong, clear opening.

Hello, my name is Alaz. Today I am going to be talking about racism.  
I believe that racism should end and that people should stop insulting people by their race.

Would you want racism to end?

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Some people say that a little bit of racism never hurt anyone, but I say that racism always hurts.

Some people say that white people are better than black people, and some people say black people are better than white people, but everyone in this world is equal and deserves to be treated as equal.

People who are racist always say racism doesn't exist, but you never know unless you have experienced being racially assaulted.

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I believe that all schools should have anti-racism workshops to educate students about racism.

We need to make a change because it can't carry on. It will be difficult but it's never impossible.

Rhetorical question - a question that is used to make a point instead of waiting for an answer.

I like how the writer shows his feelings.

Counterarguments, and responses

It would be better if he told us who Matthew Kincaid is.

He gives a good solution. He could tell us more about this and make it more personal.

### **Editor's Notes**

This is a strong draft and has real feeling in it - we can tell that Alaz cares.

### **Counter-arguments**

A counter-argument is an argument your opponents might use to try and prove you wrong. Alaz makes three counter-arguments and fights back against them with words.

#### **For example:**

Counter-argument: Racism doesn't exist.

Alaz's reply: People who say this have never experienced being racially assaulted.

A good way to come up with counter arguments is to work with a partner. Ask them to disagree with you, even if they don't. Write down what they say and see if you can use it in your speech.

### **Personal Story**

It's powerful to use a personal story - that story can be your own but it doesn't have to be. It could be a story you read about or a story of someone you know, as long as you have permission to share it. Alaz talks about Matthew Kincaid, the founder of Overcoming Racism. It would be great to hear more in the speech about Matthew Kincaid, who he is, and why Alaz was inspired by him.

### **Facts**

Alaz could include a statistic about racism in his next draft, to help people see how important the issue is. He shouldn't overload his speech with numbers, just find one good statistic that would back up his points.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

The Almeida Theatre's [Figures of Speech](#) website includes great speeches from history performed by actors, and speeches by young people from the Almeida's Young Leaders programme.

For looking at personal stories – our own and those of others – we recommend the speech [Dear Brother](#) by Samantha-Louise Archibong.

### [Get Writing with Ministry of Stories](#)

#### [826 Digital](#)

## SPECIAL THANKS

Alaz, Featured Writer  
Jonathan Perugia, Filmmaker  
Alistair Hall at We Made This, Graphic Design  
Keith Jarrett, Poet and Facilitator

## ABOUT US

**Ministry of Stories** champions the writer in every child. We were founded by Lucy Macnab, Ben Payne and best-selling author Nick Hornby, who wanted to create a space for young people in East London to become authors.

Through innovative writing clubs, small-group mentoring and fun writing resources, we help young people discover and realise their own creative potential.

Ministry of Stories centre was inspired by San Francisco's 826 Valencia and resides behind its own fantastical shop, Hoxton Street Monster Supplies, which has been selling goods such as *Cubed Earwax* and *Thickest Human Snot* to London monsters since 1818. All proceeds from the shop go back into the Ministry.



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