

How to Make Cue Cards for Speeches

Since speeches do not use visual aids, cue cards can help you deliver your speech confidently and highlight important data points or quotes that are difficult to remember.

You should never write out your entire speech on your cue cards. Instead, you should use your cue cards to help you remember your discussion points.

By creating and using effective cue cards, you will be able to:

- Make eye contact
- Maintain a conversational tone
- Gesture
- Move freely

Materials Needed:

- Packet of standard index cards
- Selection of highlighters, (for example, yellow, pink, blue and green)
- Easily-read pen - preferably blue or black ink
- Hole punch
- String

9 Features of Good Cue Cards:

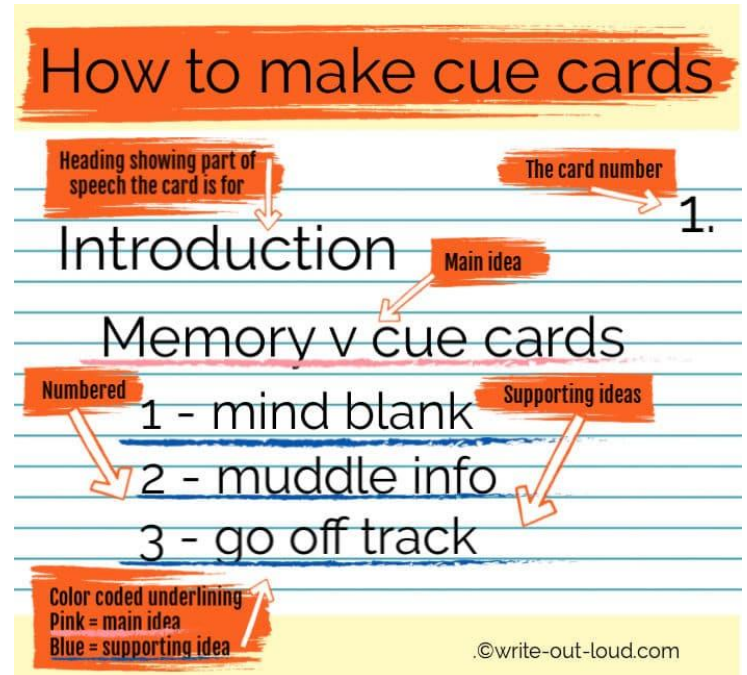
The information you put on your cards and how you lay it out is critically important. You need to be able to read and understand them at a glance.

The most user-friendly cue cards:

1. Have **ONE main subject heading or idea per card**
2. Have a **heading showing which part of the speech the card belongs to**
3. Are **written or printed clearly using larger than usual font** - so you can read them easily
4. Have **plenty of white space** around each word or phrase to help them stand out
5. Use **bullet points or numbers** to itemize the supporting ideas under the main heading
6. Are **written on ONE side of the card** only
7. Are clearly **numbered** so that you know the order they come in and it can be a good idea to **tie them together**.

Use a hole punch to make a hole through the left corner of your cards and tie with a loop of string long enough to allow them to be flipped. The advantage is if you drop them you're not scrabbling around trying to get them back into the right order, and then find where you'd got up to. That can be tough with dozens of pairs of eyes on you!

8. Are **color-coded** to show your main idea, supporting ideas, examples and transitions or links.
9. **Have approximate timings marked** so you can track yourself through your allotted time. If you find you're going over you can adjust by leaving out an extra example or conversely if you're under time, you can add one in.



Preparing your speech for cue cards

Before starting the cue cards you need to make sure your speech is fully prepared.

- **Review your speech outline:** Go through from the beginning checking the sequence of ideas, supporting material and transitions to ensure all your information is in an effective and logical sequence.
- **Read the [Speech Feedback Form](#)** to know what you will be evaluated on.
- **Practice your speech out loud and time it.** You may need to edit if it's too long or short (4-H Time Limit is 5-15 minutes).
- **Present in front of others.** Ask for feedback and make changes as necessary.

Getting from outline to writing up your cue cards:

Identifying good keywords and phrases

- Each segment or part of your speech, from its introduction to conclusion, should be reducible to a key word or phrase. The phrase or keyword will act as a prompt triggering your memory for what it was you wanted to say.
- Before you can write your cue cards you need to go through your speech outline and choose a word or phrase that best represents what each part is about.
- Once you've finished you're ready to write up your cards using the 1-9 guidelines above.

Test your cards as you make them

- Double check the effectiveness of each card as you write them to make sure you are using keyword or phrases that actually do trigger your memory.
- This is also particularly important for links or transitions. Forgetting how you got from one piece of information to the next not only leaves you stranded but your audience as well.
- Be sure to note the names of important people, facts or processes, too.

Adapted from: Dugdale, S. (2021, April 13). *Cue cards: How to make and use note cards in speeches*. Website: [Cue Cards: How to make and use note cards in speeches \(write-out-loud.com\)](https://write-out-loud.com)