

Useful phrases for speeches

This collection of useful phrases for speeches in English is primarily intended for speechwriters in the Finnish government. Language specialists whose job is to translate or proofread speeches for the Finnish government will also find these suggestions useful.

The first section outlines the standard format for speeches in English to give you an idea how speeches are usually constructed in English. Sections 2 to 6 give useful phrases for the different parts of your speech. Sections 7 to 14 give example phrases by theme.

Use British English unless your audience is American. Use the recommendations of the English Style Guide of the Prime Minister's Office and the English Style Guide of the European Commission.

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1 Basic structure of speeches

1.1 Standard format

Speeches in English generally use the following format, but you may need to adjust it to fit the particular audience or occasion:

- greeting;
- brief opening words after the greeting;
- short introduction of the topic that provides an overview of what will be covered;
- structured body setting out the main points (3 to 5) and subpoints;
- short conclusion of the speech.

Example of a standard format speech in English:

Good morning,

I am delighted to be here today. [...]

I plan to say a few words about [...].

To begin with, [...].

I've explained how [...].

So now we come to my next point. [...]

That's all I want to say on [...].

Against this background, [...].

Those are my thoughts on [...].

To sum up, [...].



1.2 Key points

Remember these dos and don'ts:

- Use linking words and transitions in the body of the text.
- Don't use a direct translation of 'Hyvät kuulijat' in the middle of the text.
- Use 'I' and 'we'.
- Use passives sparingly.
- Give three to five main points.
- Favour positive expressions instead of negative ones: 'We need to do more' instead of 'We are not doing enough'.
- You can start a sentence with 'and', 'but', 'so', etc.
- Read the speech aloud or ask Word to do it before finalising it.

To ensure easy readability for the speaker, avoid

- words and sentences that are too long;
- words that may be difficult to pronounce;
- expressions that may cause the speaker to stumble or hesitate.

When 'Hyvät kuulijat' is used in the middle of a speech in Finnish, in English consider other ways of signposting instead of 'Ladies and gentlemen' or 'Dear friends', for example:

- And ...
- Next, ...
- At this point, ...
- Moreover, ...
- In addition, ...
- Besides, ...
- However, ...
- Nevertheless, ...
- Regardless, ...
- To conclude, ...
- In conclusion, ...
- Finally, ...
- Lastly, ...



2 Opening your speech

At the beginning of your speech, greet your audience. The formality of your greeting will depend on the nature of the event. Favour gender-neutral greetings, where possible. For the correct ways of addressing various dignitaries, see Annex 7 of [the European Commission's English Style Guide](#).

Formal

- Honourable Members of Parliament, Dear Friends, ...
- Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Madam President, ...
- Mr President, Honourable Members of Parliament, Members of the Political Groups and ...
- Vice-President of the Commission, ...
- Excellencies, ...
- Your Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues, ...

Less formal

- Professor [surname], dear students, ...
- Dear parliamentary colleagues, ...
- Distinguished guests/attendees, ...
- Distinguished participants (in the event), ...
- Representatives of the media, ...

Informal

- Dear friends, ...
- My dear graduates, ...
- Hello everyone, ...
- Good morning/afternoon (everyone), ...
- Dear guests/audience/listeners/attendees, ...
- Dear participants (in the event), ...

Welcoming the audience to the event:

- Allow me to welcome today the many delegates from all round the world.
- I would like to warmly welcome you all to Finland.
- It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the closing ceremony of ...
- It gives me great pleasure to extend to you all a warm welcome to Helsinki and to this [event].
- It is a great pleasure (for me) to open this [event].

Introducing yourself:

- Allow me to introduce myself.
- It is a great pleasure for me to bring a message from the Finnish Government.
- As Finland's Minister of [field], I am particularly pleased that ...



Expressing appreciation for the opportunity to address the audience:

- It is a great pleasure to be here with you today/this evening.
- It is a great pleasure and an honour to be here among you today.
- It is a pleasure for me to be here once again to talk with you in my capacity as ...
- It is a great honour to be here at the [venue]. I feel privileged to be here with you.
- It is a great honour for me to address this meeting. I am looking forward to the debate and the exchange of ideas.
- Thank you for this opportunity to talk about ...
- Thank you for this opportunity to present to you ...
- Thank you very much for inviting me to speak here today.
- I would like to thank you for this opportunity to open the [event] ...
- I am delighted to be here today.
- I feel very much at home at this [event], and I am glad to be back.
- I wish to extend my sincerest thanks to you for this opportunity to present ...
- I feel privileged to be here with you in the lovely city of [place] today, and it is a great honour to speak at your meeting. You have chosen a very crucial topic.
- I want to extend a warm welcome to all, and deeply thank you for your engagement.
- Thank you for that kind welcome and thank you also to the [organiser] for hosting today's event.

3 Presenting your topic and outlining the structure of your speech

Give a brief overview of the topics you will cover and explain your goals. This will help engage the audience and create curiosity about the topics.

- My theme for today is ...
- My objective today is ...
- Today, I am here to talk to you about ...
- Today I place before you my vision of ...
- Today I want to set an ambitious course for ...
- Today I would like to say a few words about ...
- Today I would like to report to you on the results of ...
- Today I want to speak about how we move forward, and lay out a blueprint for ...
- In my speech, I will mainly highlight the following themes: ...
- The theme of the forum is very topical.
- Right now, it feels especially important to be talking to you about ...
- To begin with, I would like to take this opportunity to tell you how ...
- I wanted to take this opportunity to tell you a bit about ...
- I'd like to share a brief breakdown of ...
- Without going into too much detail, I'd like to briefly mention ...
- This is why I thought it might be a good day to talk about ...



- I will now reflect on my own answers and share some thoughts on ...
- In the analysis I am about to make, I first acknowledge ...
- I want to take this opportunity to share some of these challenges with you. But first I would like to say a few words about what we have achieved so far.
- These are very good questions, and I will use them as a starting point to share my thoughts and comments.

Outlining the structure of your speech will give your audience an idea of what to expect. It is best to have no more than five main points, otherwise your audience may have trouble following and remembering your speech. All main points should be clearly 'signposted', e.g. firstly, secondly, thirdly.

- My talk will be in three parts ...
- Today I have three main points ...
- In my speech, I will mainly highlight the following themes ...
- In my address to you here today, I have three important messages for ...
- This is why I want to give you three pieces of advice about ...
- I'll start with ...
- First, I will talk about ...
- I'll begin with ...
- ... then I will look at ...
- ... next ...

If you plan to have a question and answer session:

- After my talk, there will be time for discussion and questions.
- I will be glad to answer any questions.

4 Presenting the main body of your speech

Beginning the main body of your speech:

- First (of all), ...
- First and foremost, ...
- For starters ...
- To start from the beginning ...
- I will start with a matter that ...
- My first message is ...
- The first question is ...
- The first thing to mention is ...
- Let's look at the first part of the question ...
- Let me start with some general information on ...
- Let me begin by explaining why/how ...
- Before I start, does anyone know ...
- As we are all aware ...



Ending a part of your speech:

- I've explained how ...
- That's all I want to say on ...
- Those are my thoughts on ...

Beginning a new part of your speech:

- Second, ...
- Third, ...
- And secondly, ...
- My second piece of advice to you today is ...
- This/Which brings me to my second point (which is about) ...
- Next, I would like to say a few words about ...
- I'd now like to move on to the next part ...
- This leads me to my next point, which is ...
- Next, I would like to turn to the topic of ...
- Turning your attention now to ...
- Let's now turn to ...
- Let me move on to ...
- Let us now consider ...
- We now come to the third and final question ...
- This brings me to my last point, which is that ...

Repeating an idea or referring back to an idea:

- As I said, ...
- As I said earlier, ...
- As I said at the beginning, ...
- As I said at the start of my speech, ...
- As I have said before, ...
- As I already mentioned, ...
- On this note...
- This ties in with ...
- This relates to what I was saying earlier ...
- Let me go back to what I said earlier about ...
- To return to my original point, we can ...
- As I approach the end of my speech, I will turn back to the ...



5 Summarising your ideas

Summarise your ideas in a short conclusion. It gives the speech a sense of closure and completion, and since listening is an imperfect art, repetition is seen an important aspect of public speaking in English.

- In the end, ...
- In conclusion/short/brief, ...
- To summarise/conclude, ...
- I'd like to conclude by ...
- If I had to sum up three priorities for ..., I would say ...
- To sum up, ...
- To sum up the challenges facing ...
- All in all, ...
- All things considered ...
- And above all ...
- As I noted ...
- The point is ...
- Given these points ...
- So there are my thoughts.
- Let us leave this [venue] today with a clear resolve ...
- I want to conclude with a few words on/about ...
- Let me finish my speech by making a few comments about/on ...
- In conclusion, let me sum up my main points.
- Weighing the pros and cons, I come to the conclusion that ...
- Before giving the floor to the next speaker, who ..., I propose that we first look back to ...

6 Closing your speech

Thanking the audience:

- Thank you.
- Thank you for your time/attention.
- In the closing stages of this [event], I would like to thank you all for your valuable contributions.
- As the host of the meeting, I thank you very much for your participation and attention.
- And I would like to say thank you once again to ... for ...
- That brings me to the end of my presentation. Thank you for listening/your attention.
- Thank you all for listening. It was a pleasure being here today.
- I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to ...
- Thank you to ... and ... for your great work.
- We thank ... for all your hard work and for your dedication to ...



Thanking the event organiser or other contributors:

- I wish to extend my sincere thanks to ...
- I wish to thank the chairperson and members for their thorough work.
- I would also like to thank all those who contributed to the success of the [event] ...
- I would like to thank everyone involved in this project.
- I am deeply grateful to ...
- I should also say a final word of thanks to ...
- Thank you for inviting me to visit you here today.
- Thank you for that kind welcome and thank you also to the [organiser] for hosting today's event.

Wishing success:

- I wish you a fruitful and successful conference.
- I wish you all a fruitful day with interesting presentations and inspiring exchanges of ideas.
- I wish you an inspiring conference and a very pleasant stay in Helsinki.
- I want to wish you a successful two days and I look forward to hearing from you about the results of the discussions.
- With these words, I wish you all a very fruitful and inspiring symposium.
- Allow me to wish you a very successful and productive/result-oriented conference day.
- Once again: My warmest congratulations to ...
- Thank you so much and have a good day.

Handing over to another speaker:

- Now I will pass you over to ...
- [name], the floor is yours.
- I now have the pleasure to invite to the stage ...

7 Using hedging phrases

Hedging phrases, or hedges, are an important part of polite language. They soften our language and make what we say less direct or forceful. Speakers who fail to hedge correctly may be perceived as impolite.

Being polite or cautious when giving explanations or conveying information:

- I think ...
- I mean ...
- I believe ...
- I suppose ...
- I guess ...
- I assume ...
- I take it ...



- I have to believe ...
- I don't see that ...
- As far as I can tell ...
- As far as I'm concerned ...
- ... probably ...
- ... presumably ...
- ... commonly ...
- ... right now ...
- To our knowledge ...
- It is our view that ...
- It may/could be that ...
- It is likely that ...
- It is possible/probable/almost certain that ...

Ways of distancing the speaker from a proposition:

- It is thought that ...
- It is believed that ...
- It has been reported that ...
- It has commonly been assumed that ...
- There is some evidence to suggest that ...
- According to recent reports, ...
- According to [someone else's] estimates, ...
- At least to [someone else's] knowledge, ...
- [Someone else's] findings suggest that ...

Information supported by statistical data is often perceived as reliable and convincing. Using round numbers or approximations instead of exact figures is generally more appropriate for a speech:

- ... almost ...
- ... about ...
- ... around ...
- ... roughly ...
- ... nearly ...
- ... approximately ...
- ... often ...
- ... occasionally ...
- ... something between ...

Being cautious when discussing implications:

- The findings suggest that ...
- Taken together, these results suggest that ...
- These results would seem to suggest that...
- One possible implication of this is that ...



- There would therefore seem to be definite need for ...
- A reasonable approach to tackle this issue could be to ...

Being cautious when talking about the future:

- It is almost certain that ...
- There is a (strong) possibility that ...
- There is a small chance that ...
- This phenomenon may/could/might become more common in the future.
- It is likely/possible that the situation will improve in the long term.

8 Giving details or showing emphasis

Adding details:

- In addition, ...
- In this connection, ...
- In the European context, ...
- In this context, I would like to raise a few key points that should be remembered when ...
- ... but above all, it means ...
- In this situation ...
- In relation to ...
- In the field of ...
- In the first place, ...
- In the light of ...
- Needless to say, ...
- Besides ...
- Increasingly ...
- At the same time, ...
- As regards ...
- As for Government, ...
- As a matter of fact, ...
- ... not only ... but also
- When it comes to ...
- With this in mind ...
- And by the way, ...
- And believe it or not ...
- On the subject of ..., ...
- Coupled with ...
- Not to mention ...
- In the same way/fashion ...
- I might add that ...
- I also want to tell you what ...
- Indeed, we already know that ...



- This is something that ...
- Another possible way to ...
- Another dimension is ...
- Another important policy area ...
- Furthermore, it is my (personal) opinion that ...
- But I would also like to say that ...
- I would now like to make a few comments on ...
- Moreover ...
- As well as ...
- Together with ...
- Again ...
- Also ...
- Apparently ...
- Equally important ...
- Finally ...

Showing emphasis:

- It should be emphasised that ...
- I would like to draw your attention to this point ...
- Another significant point is that ...
- The significance of this is ...
- This is important because ...
- We have to remember that ...
- A key aspect of ... is ...

9 Expressing point of view, agreement or disagreement

Expressing your point of view:

- I am glad that ...
- I am happy/pleased to note that ...
- I (firmly/sincerely) believe that ...
- I am (personally) convinced that ...
- I am (very/particularly) pleased that ...
- I am sure/confident that ...
- I am proud to say that ...
- I know that ...
- I hope that ...
- I am optimistic about ...
- I believe as strongly as ever ...
- I know from experience that ...
- I am sure you know ...
- I have great respect for ...



- I care a lot about ...
- I look forward to ...
- I think it is fair to say that ...
- I had the privilege of ...
- For me, ...
- In my view, ...
- As I always say ...
- To our minds, ...
- My own view is that ...
- So, I think that ...
- It is important to remember that ...
- It is no secret that ...
- It is my intention to ...
- It is my strong belief that ...
- It is my hope that ...
- Furthermore, it is my (personal) opinion that ...
- In this connection, I would say that ...
- My first observation is that ...
- In spite of the setbacks, I am pleased to say ...
- There's never been a better time to ...
- There's no question that ...

Showing agreement:

- I am also pleased that ...
- I recognise that ...
- I fully agree with ...
- I appreciate the fact that ...
- I am confident that ...
- I have no hesitation in saying that ...
- Of course, ...
- It is clear/obvious that ...
- It is, of course, true that ...
- There is no doubt that ...
- To my great delight ...
- I welcome the start of this debate on ...
- I welcome the focus of this conference on ...
- We have acknowledged that ...
- I have a great deal of confidence in ...
- The effort has been worth it.
- I hope our efforts and success can inspire others around the world.
- As you (might) know, ...
- We (all) know that ...
- We are all aware that ...
- The message is clear.



- There is wide agreement that ...
- I have great sympathy with those who ...
- I want to assure you of my full support in ...
- We attach great importance to ...
- Given this situation, it is hardly surprising that ...
- It is well established that ...
- It is widely accepted that ...
- It is common knowledge that ...

Showing opposition or disagreement:

- However, I cannot agree with those who ...
- I have no hesitation in saying that ...
- I am not altogether sure that ...
- I do not personally believe that ...
- This is not acceptable.

Expressing concern:

- I am afraid/concerned/worried that ...
- There is good reason to be concerned about ...
- I have raised our concerns regarding ...
- I voiced our concern at ...
- Key concerns for ... are ...
- I think it's a problem that ...

10 Expressing cause or consequence

Expressing cause or condition:

- In order to ...
- In view of ...
- In the wake of ...
- For the purpose of ...
- Provided that ...
- Given that ...
- Only if ...
- Even if ...
- So as to ...
- Owing to ...
- Due to ...
- Granted (that) ...
- As long as ...
- On (the) condition (that) ...



- With this in mind ...

Expressing purpose:

- My/Our/The goal is ...
- The aim is to ...
- One of the vital objectives of ...
- We need to find ways to ...
- We must make sure that ...
- We will/must try to ensure that ...
- We need to work harder on ...
- What we need right now is ...
- We will make every effort to ...
- We are actively involved in ...
- I call for ...
- I want us to make a commitment to ...
- We must never again ...
- It is not about ...
- I hope that we will be able to ...
- The first thing we can do is to ...
- The first step is to ...

Expressing causality:

- Thus, ...
- Therefore, ...
- As a result ...
- Accordingly, ...
- Consequently, ...
- For this reason, ...
- It also means ...
- This means making sure that ...
- Should this trend persist, we will no longer be able ...
- In some cases, ...
- In that case ...
- In effect ...
- Under those circumstances ...



11 Giving examples or explanations and indicating importance

Giving examples:

- For example/instance, ...
- A good example of ... is ...
- These are examples of ...
- To give you an example, ...
- To illustrate (this point), ...
- ... illustrates this point clearly.
- Take ...
- ... such as ...
- For one thing ...
- In concrete terms, ...
- I could mention the [event] in [place] as another example.
- Another example of what is meant by ... is ...
- This is certainly true in the case of ...
- This demonstrates the benefit of using ...

Paraphrasing:

- In short ...
- In other words, ...
- To put it another way ...
- To put it more simply ...
- To clarify ...
- I am talking about ...
- What I mean to say is ...
- As I hope I have made clear ...
- This is mainly about ...
- That is/was why ...
- To this end, we need ...
- With this in mind, ...
- Namely, ...
- In fact, ...
- Indeed, ...
- In terms of ...
- By the same token, ...
- By doing so, ...
- As such, ...
- At the same time, we should ...
- Our intention is not to ...
- Here we should keep in mind that ...



Making a point:

- Above all, ...
- Indeed, ...
- In fact, ...
- Chiefly, ...
- Frequently, ...
- Surprisingly, ...
- I want to focus on ...
- This underlines that ...
- I would also draw attention to ...
- First thing to remember ...
- Another key point ...
- A point often overlooked ...
- To point out ...
- I (just) want to emphasise that ...
- It is fair to say that ...
- But let me spell out some facts.
- One thing is certain ...
- We need to look at ...
- We should also keep/bear in mind that ...
- We must remember ...
- Primarily ...
- The main thing is ...
- Most importantly ...
- It is important to realise/remember that ...
- At the same time, though, it is important that ...
- This is why my most important piece of advice to you today is ...
- The fundamental question is ...
- It is essential to ...
- We all know how essential it is to ...
- It is vital that ...
- It is no secret that ...
- It is my strong belief that ...
- It is quite clear that ...
- But the fact remains that ...
- The truth/problem/paradox is that ...
- This becomes evident when looking at ...
- The defining issue of our time is ...
- There is an immense need to ...
- These initiatives are the bedrock of ...
- Think about that.
- That's right ...
- Let me say categorically ...
- And our number one duty is to ...



- But this needs to be said as well: ...
- This needs to be said loud and clear ...
- I think that it is reasonable/fair to assume that ...
- We should not underestimate the relevance of ...
- This is also a good opportunity to consider ...
- However, we need to recognise the fact that ...
- I want you to remember these three things.

12 Comparing ideas or showing similarity

Comparing or contrasting ideas:

- Of course ..., but ...
- Even though ...
- Although (this may be true) ...
- But ...
- Even so, ...
- After all, ...
- However, ...
- Nevertheless, ...
- Irrespective of ...
- In spite of ...
- Despite ...
- On the one hand, ... On the other hand, ...
- Then again ...
- And above all, ...
- That said, ...
- Not only that, ...
- In reality, ...
- Besides, ...
- Instead, ...
- Whereas ...
- Otherwise, ...
- On the contrary, ...
- By/in contrast, ...
- Different from ...
- Alternatively, ...
- Unfortunately, ...
- Yet this is an area where ...
- Where this is not the case, ...
- The Ministry of [field], in turn, is responsible for ...
- Even under these new circumstances, ...
- But the opposite is the case.
- But at the same time, it is worth noting that ...



Showing similarity:

- Likewise, we should note that ...
- Similarly, it is understood that ...
- And we can also say that ...

13 Expressing time or place

Expressing time:

- Today ...
- Today I say to you that ...
- On this day, we gather ...
- Starting today, ...
- At present, ...
- At the moment, ...
- Right now ...
- Even now ...
- Especially now ...
- Today and in the long term ...
- And as of today ...
- This coming Friday, ...
- Next March, ...
- In December, ...
- This autumn, ...
- This year, ...
- In recent years, ...
- Ahead of us, in the spring ...
- Over the next 50 years ...
- Last week, ...
- In these past weeks ...
- In the past ...
- Recently ...
- Over the last three years ...
- Looking back over the period ...
- In 2020, ...
- Now, in 2024 ...
- Between 2021 and 2022, ...
- For nearly a century ...
- For decades ...
- Just a few decades ago ...
- Dating back to ...
- Since the beginning/start of ...
- During its Presidency, ...



- Sometimes, ...
- At points ...
- From time to time ...
- Sooner or later ...
- At the same time ...
- ... and even more so during ... times like these.
- We now find ourselves at a key moment in history.
- Within days of taking office ...
- On taking office ...

Indicating place:

- In Finland, ...
- In Finland alone ...
- In Finland, Europe and all over the world ...
- Within the EU, ...
- At the EU level, ...
- Beyond our borders ...
- On the international stage ...

Expressing chronology or sequence:

- Initially, ...
- To begin with, ...
- In the first place, ...
- Prior to ...
- Previously, ...
- So far, ...
- Until now, ...
- Now that ...
- In the long run, ...
- In due time, ...
- As soon as ...
- Presently, ...
- As long as ...
- Meanwhile, ...
- Immediately ...
- Whenever ...
- Eventually, ...
- In time, ...
- By the time ...
- Occasionally, ...
- Following this, ...
- Subsequently, ...
- Finally, ...



14 Quoting or referring to sources

Quoting:

- Allow me to quote ...
- Finally, I would like to quote ... (, who observed that: ...)
- To quote ...
- ... but in the words of ...
- I am quoting from ...
- I want to quote something:

Referring to sources:

- Based on our findings ...
- Data from several studies suggest that ...
- Many recent studies have shown that ...
- A number of studies have found/reported/indicated that ...
- A recent study by ... described how ...



About this guideline

This guideline is based on an earlier guideline ‘Puheiden ilmaisuja’ from 2008. It was a list of useful phrases and models for speechwriters and translators and included extracts from speeches delivered mainly by the Prime Minister during Finland’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2006. The speeches were translated from Finnish to English by translators of the Prime Minister’s Office and proofread by native English-speaking language specialists.

The phrases and examples in this guideline have been revised and expanded from the ones published in the 2008 guideline.

‘Useful phrases for speeches’ is published under [Glossaries and guidance on the website of the Prime Minister’s Office](#).

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