

## **Planning a talk**

Once you have arranged a talk there are a number of important questions that you will need to ask the organiser.

### Preparation questions:

- 1) How many people do they think will be coming?
- 2) What are the acoustics in the room like? Will you need a microphone?
- 3) How long will you be able to talk for?
- 4) Will there be a Q & A session after the talk?
- 5) Is it okay to bring copies of your book to sell?
- 6) Will the library/group do any publicity about the event themselves?
- 7) If so, can you help?
- 8) If not, would they consider it?

### ***Preparing for your talk***

If you have never given a talk, or stood in front of an audience before, you may be feeling a little nervous about the prospect. The key to calming those nerves and having a successful talk is very simple – preparation. The more preparation you do before the event, the more confident you will feel about it. Keep reminding yourself why you are giving the talk – you want to let as many people as possible know about your book; this is a golden opportunity to talk to a captive audience about your work (and hopefully sell a few copies into the bargain!).

### The keys to preparation:

- 1) Think about the main points you want to get across in your talk and start making notes.
- 2) Consider the tone of your talk and how that fits in with the tone of your book. Is your book serious or funny? It is important not to be so serious that you risk your talk being dull, but equally you should steer clear of being too jokey or telling jokes. Humour is very subjective and you have no way of knowing in advance your audience's sense of humour.
- 3) Practise, practise, practise. Once you have written your notes, stand up, perhaps in front of a mirror, and practise giving your talk. Keep practising until you know the content and order without having to refer to your notes.
- 4) Make some cue cards on small index cards, with keywords that will jog your memory on the day. They should be clear enough for you to be able to glance down and quickly see the keyword while still talking.

5) Time your talk. Do a “dress rehearsal” - a full run through without stopping, to get an idea of how long your talk lasts. Do you have to keep it within a specific time limit? Now is the time to make sure your talk is not too short or too long – you don't want to discover that on the day.

6) If possible, rehearse your talk in front of a friend or family member. Choose someone whose opinion you trust and be open to constructive criticism.

On the day:

1) Don't forget to take copies of your book with you.

2) If you are accepting cash payments make sure you have lots of change. For example, if your book is priced at £7.99 you will need some pennies for change, and change of ten pound notes.

3) Arrive nice and early, especially if you need to help set up the room before the talk.

4) Have a look at your notes before the talk, but just like when we did exams at school, don't be tempted to do last minute cramming! If you are prepared you should know what you want to say by now, and furiously looking over your notes in an attempt to reassure yourself will probably have the opposite effect.

5) Even if you are feeling nervous you should never tell this to the audience. You may think this will get them on your side, but it will probably make them feel uncomfortable.

6) Be aware of the pace of your talk. If you notice the audience are getting restless could you switch to a more dynamic or interactive aspect of your talk, perhaps inviting some comments or questions from the audience on what you have said so far?

7) Don't make the audience feel obliged to buy your book. At the end of the talk invite them to come up and talk to you individually and say that you have copies for sale for anyone who would like to purchase one.

8) Enjoy yourself. You are talking to an audience about your book. Enjoy it! Good luck!