

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF ISLAMIC TALKS

by

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I - BEGINNING:

1. Always begin the speech by praising Allah (swt) and by wishing / sending peace to the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions. eg. "Al-Hamdu lillaah, Was-Salaatu Was-Salaam 'Ala Rasoolillaah, Wa-Ala Alihi Wa-ashaabihi Ajma'een. Amma Ba'ad".
("Praise be to Allah and Peace and Blessing on the Prophet of Allah, his Descendents and all his Companions...")
2. Then seek Allah (swt)'s protection from Satan the accursed by saying, "Auzoo Billahi Minash-Shaytaanir-Rajiim".
("I seek refuge in Allah from Satan the accursed")
3. This should be followed by, "Bismillaahir-Rahmanir-Rahiim"
(In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful).
4. It is preferable to follow this with Arabic recitation of any verse or verses of the Glorious Qur'an which are relevant to the topic.
5. It is advisable to seek Allah (swt's) help in delivering the message by reciting Surah Ta-Ha, Chapter 20 Verses 25-28 of the Glorious Qur'an. "Rabbishrah lii sadrii; Wa yassir liii 'amrii; Wahlul 'uqdatam-mil-li-saanii, Yafqahuu qawlii:"
("O my Lord! expand me my breast; Ease my task for me; And remove the impediment from my speech, So they may understand what I say")
6. Mention the name of the Chairman, Chief guest, any other speakers on the stage if present, and then address the audience and welcome them by saying, "...Respected Elders and My Dear Brothers and Sisters, I welcome all of you with the Islamic greetings...."
7. Now wish the audience, "As-Salaamu Alaikum, Wa Rahmatullahi, Wa Barkatahu", "May Peace, Mercy and Blessing of Allah (swt) be on all of you".

(Combine step 6 and 7)

N.B. Do not mention the translation of the Arabic verses within brackets

II - INTRODUCTION:

1. Mention the topic of the talk.
2. Clarify the meaning of the topic if required (for eg. the word Da'wah).

3. State the importance of the topic.
4. If applicable, give the relevance of your talk to the present situation (current issues, special occasions like graduation ceremony, etc.).
5. Explain historical background, if required.
6. Clarify misconceptions, if any, regarding the subject of the talk.

III - BODY OF THE LECTURE:

1. Divide the body of the lecture into various sub-headings (eg. The topic 'Women's Rights in Islam' can be divided into spiritual, economic, social, educational, legal and political rights of Women in Islam).
2. If required, mention the sub-headings at the outset.
3. The duration of the body should at least be twice in length and duration than that of the beginning, introduction and conclusion put together.
4. Explain the different points of your lecture in such a way that even a common man understands it, unless the lecture is addressed to a particular audience consisting of specialists in that field.
5. It is preferable to mention few points with different explanations and examples rather than mentioning several points which are difficult to assimilate.
6. If possible, analyse and discuss the topic from different angles.
7. Do not divert or stray away from the topic.
8. Do not beat around the bush by giving vague and irrelevant matter.
9. Your matter should be interesting enough to hold the attention and concentration of the audience.
10. The content should do full justice to the topic of the talk.

IV - CONCLUSION:

1. Plan the conclusion well.
2. Refrain from saying "Finally ..." or " In conclusion ..." more than once.
3. Summarise the body, if required.
4. Do not repeat the complete speech again while summarising.
5. Appeal for action, based on implications.
6. Conclude the talk by giving a very striking example or a relevant incident or a thought provoking quotation.
7. You may conclude the talk with an emphatic Qur'anic verse.
8. An excellent conclusion is very important for a lasting impression of the talk.
9. The last sentence preferably should be Surah Yunus chapter 10 verse 10 'Wa aakhiru da'waa naa 'anil- Hamdulillaahi Rabbil-'alamiin'
("And the close of our cry will be: Praise be to Allah the cherisher and Sustainer of the Wolds!")
or any other relevant verse of the Qur'an or authentic Hadith to be quoted in Arabic.

V - IMPORTANT TIPS FOR AN IMPRESSIVE AND AUTHENTIC TALK:

1. Do not carry the text of your full speech to the stage or the podium. It is unimpressive. There will be very little impact if you read the lecture.
2. It is preferable that you do not carry any summary or points of the lecture. It is best to speak altogether from memory.
3. If under unavoidable circumstances, you have to refer to points, write only the headings, sub-headings and the very important points in big bold letters on sheets of paper. (While doing so, make sure that you number and arrange them to avoid last moment shuffling).
4. Quote as many relevant verses of the Qur'an as possible which deal with the subject.
5. Whenever feasible, expound quotations of the Qur'an by giving cross- references (the best commentary of the Qur'an is the Qur'an itself).
6. If possible, quote verses of the Qur'an in Arabic alongwith the translation.
7. Quote only authentic Ahadith.
8. Whenever you quote any religious scripture, it is highly preferable to give the reference.
9. Quote statistics for better impact and emphasis.
10. Mention the source of any quotation or statistics that you cite.
11. If possible, display the books from which you quote, e.g. Qur'an, Bible, etc.
12. Audio-Visual aids like clippings from video cassettes, over head projectors, slide projectors, flipcharts, etc. are useful for seminars and small discussions, but are not very effective when Islamic lectures are addressed to large audiences.
13. You may include stories, incidents and common examples from day-to-day life to make the talk interesting.
14. If the speech is inherently serious, you may include a humorous incident, example or joke, to keep the audience engrossed and to break the monotony. But the joke should be relevant and not cheap.
15. When appropriate, a few words in Urdu / Hindi (or in the local language) may be said to prevent monotony.

VI - OTHER IMPORTANT TIPS:

1. Always bear in mind that your objective is to seek Allah's pleasure and to communicate the message of Islam.
2. Never boast about yourself or your achievements. Be humble and polite.

3. As a speaker, you should establish credibility. The audience should have faith and confidence in the speaker.
4. Give the translation of each and every Qur'anic verse you quote as well as the one you quote at the beginning of the talk (the prayer at the beginning and conclusion of talk need not be translated).
5. Provide maximum information in the shortest time possible by being to the point and brief.

VII - POINTS TO BE AVOIDED:

1. If you forget any point, do not make it obvious by giving a long pause. Jump to the next point or say something relevant to the previous point, while trying to recollect what is forgotten. Always be prepared with fillers, for e.g. certain verses of the Qur'an like 16:125.
2. Avoid using the same favourite repetitive words or sentences.
3. Do not interject your speech with unnecessary phrases / fillers (eg. "I mean", "you know", "hope you understand", "and all ", etc.).
4. Avoid slang words like "stuff", "guy", etc.
5. Do not ever say, "I am sorry, I did not have time to prepare", "My speech will not be good", "I do not know much about the subject of the talk". Directly enter into the subject confidently and do your best.
6. Do not exceed the time allotted.

VIII - PRELIMINARY PREPARATION:

1. Obtain a brief idea of the audience you are going to address:
 - a) the language they understand.
 - b) background of the majority of the expected audience.
 - c) whether the audience consists of a group of specialists or professionals, or whether it is a heterogeneous group.
 - d) the group to be addressed, is it hostile or friendly?
2. Study the occasion & the reason for the talk:

IX - PREPARATION OF THE MATTER OF THE SPEECH:

1. Notes: Prepare notes of your complete speech well in advance.

2. Outline: Prepare a point-wise summary or a skeletal outline of your complete written talk for a final glance or revision.
3. Qur'anic Quotations: Note all the Qur'anic Verses to be quoted along with their translation on a separate sheet for a final glance or revision.
4. Duration: (a) A short talk should be of a duration of 15 minutes to 30 minutes.
(b) A long speech should not exceed 45 minutes.
(However, if the speaker is an expert orator and can hold the attention and interest of the audience, he may speak for about an hour).
5. Order: It is preferable to arrange the talk in a topic-wise order rather than chronological order unless required.
6. Continuity and Sequence: There should be continuity and sequence in the speech and it should flow smoothly from the beginning to the end.
7. Link: Link should be established between various points covered in the speech.

X - RESEARCH:

1. Do extensive reading and research for your talk. (You should have much more additional information and knowledge regarding the subject of the talk besides what you will be speaking).
2. Read as many books as possible (related to the subject of your talk) by various authors.
3. View as many video cassettes as possible (relevant to the subject) by various speakers.
4. Viewing video cassettes of international speakers will give you an idea of the style of speaking, presentation, matter, etc.
5. Whenever you use a quotation from any book or audio / video tape of any speaker, check its authenticity from the source as well as the authenticity of the source. Do not blindly repeat it without having checked its authenticity.
6. Whenever you repeat the logical and convincing example of any other speaker, either repeat it verbatim or change the example only if you can improve upon it, or if it has the same impact (without having any defects or loopholes).
7. Prepare yourself thoroughly for the question and answer session. The entire impact and credibility of a good speech delivered well is lost, if the speaker fumbles while answering questions, or gives long, incoherent and unconvincing replies.

XI - REHEARSAL:

1. Practice makes you perfect.
2. It gives you confidence.
3. It gives you an opportunity to rectify your mistakes.
4. You can time your speech.
5. The more rehearsals and trials you give, the better will be your final speech delivery or presentation.
6. It is preferable to have an experienced person sitting in the audience during the trial who can point out your mistakes. The last option is to give the trial in front of a mirror.
7. If possible, do a video recording of the trial and also of the actual talk itself so that you yourself can judge and improve your speech in future. It can also be given to experts for evaluation.
8. Check and practise the pronunciation of new and difficult words.