

2025 ROTARY SPEECH CONTEST



Rotary District 5180 Speech Theme: “THE MAGIC OF SERVICE”

The speech must be between 5 and 8 minutes.

Notes **are** allowed at the club level, **one 3 x 5 note card** is allowed at the Semi-Final level, but **no notes** are allowed at the Finals level.

Club Level Prizes: 1st-\$200 2nd-\$100 3rd-\$50 4th-Club Discretion

First Place Winners will participate in one of four regional semi-final competitions between
FEBRUARY 21 - MARCH 15, 2025

Semi-final Prizes: 1st- \$250 2nd-\$100 3rd-\$50

The four First Place Semi-final winners will compete in the Final Speech Contest

- **SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2025 during the morning of the District Assembly (Specific Time TBD), at Twelve Bridges High School, Lincoln, CA, DISTRICT 5180 FINAL SPEECH CONTEST.**

Final Speech Contest Prizes: 1st- \$2,000 2nd-\$1,000 3rd-\$500 4th-\$250

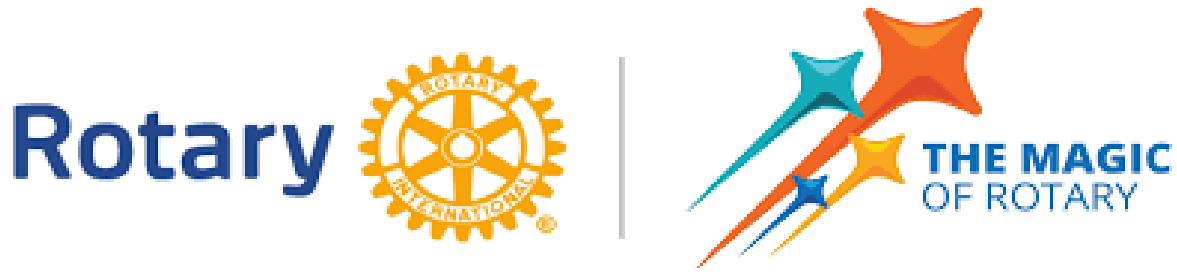
ROTARY CLUB OF _____

DATE, TIME, & LOCATION OF CONTEST: _____

ROTARY CLUB CONTACT: _____

For further information, contact the above local Rotary Club Contact or send email with your name and town of residence to Rotary District 5180 Speech Chairperson Bill Highland: highland.bill@gmail.com

ROTARY DISTRICT 5180



Rotary District 5180 Speech Theme: “THE MAGIC OF SERVICE”

SPEECH CONTEST STUDENT ENTRY FORM

I hereby apply to enter the Rotary District 5180 Speech Contest. I will compete on ___/___/_____ at the Club Speech Contest of the Rotary Club of _____.

I agree to abide by the rules of the Rotary District 5180 Speech Contest and to create an original speech for delivery.

I will enter **ONLY ONE** Rotary Speech Contest during the 2025 school year. I will not share my speech with any other contestant in the District.

Please fill out completely and legibly

Student Name (printed): _____ Grade: _____

Student Email Address: _____

Student Phone: Home: () _____ Cell: () _____

Student Home Address: _____
City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Parents Names (optional): _____

School: _____

Name of Teacher or Coach (if applicable): _____

Student Signature: _____

To enter this Rotary 2025 Speech Contest, return this form to:

_____ **not later than** ___/___/_____

or

Send to Bill Highland District 5180 Speech Chairperson at highland.bill@gmail.com (530) 933-9040

2025 SPEECH CONTEST RULES

GENERAL RULES:

1. Contestants must be high school students in grades 9, 10, 11, or 12.
2. Students being homeschooled or in a program recognized by their school district or the State of California are allowed to enter the speech contest.
3. A student may compete in only ONE Rotary District 5180 Club Speech Contest.
4. Any prior year's winner at any level may compete again at the club level, as long as they are otherwise eligible, and advance to the next level if they win.
5. All contestants must **ARRIVE** or **LOG IN** at their designated contest locations **NO LATER THAN TEN MINUTES PRIOR** to the start of the contest. Late arrivals will be **DISQUALIFIED**.
6. Student contestants advancing to the Semi-Final Speech Contest level may only compete in the Area Semi-Final Speech Contest of his or her sponsoring Rotary Club.
7. The theme for every contest level is "**THE MAGIC OF SERVICE.**"
8. The same speech must be used for all levels of competition.
9. No pictures or video recording are permitted during any speaker's presentation.
10. Under penalty of possible disqualification, contestants **may not mention their name, school or sponsoring Rotary Club** prior to or during their speeches.
11. **No displays, props or prompting are allowed.** Clothing containing logos may be considered props.
12. Protests or concerns about the conduct of the contest at any level must be made to the moderator of the contest **prior to the announcement of the winners.**
13. All contestants must agree to speak at the Semi-Final and Final Speech contests should they advance that far.
14. In the event that a Club or Semi-Final winner becomes unable to compete at the next level, the runner-up in the original contest will be offered a chance to compete.
15. Enthusiastic, dignified, and polite audience applause is encouraged immediately following each contestant's presentation.
16. The speech must be **at least 5 minutes, but not more than 8 minutes in length.** A Timer Alert will be given to each contestant of Green at 5 minutes, Yellow at 7 minutes, and Red at 7 minutes and 30 seconds. Contestants with speeches ending before 5 minutes or after 8 minutes may be disqualified per recommendation of the Timekeeper and Speech Contest Moderator, but cannot place above fourth place.

ROTARY SPEECH SUGGESTIONS

(Comments by Rotarian Proposers of the 2025 theme “**The Magic of Service**”)

James Fowler of the Rotary Club of Walnut Grove

When I think about Rotary, the first word that comes to mind is service. In our desire to enhance our communities, we are most effective in serving others. And as we do that, there is something special about it. It is a catalyst for helping others who can then do more in our community, and by natural progression, it enhances others’ lives beyond those we directly serve. Yet, catalyst is not a good enough descriptor of what it really does. And this year, our new Rotary International President has captured it by using the word “magic”.

Now to be honest, when I first heard this year’s international theme, “The Magic of Rotary”, my first thought was of the illusionist, entertainment type of magic, or of childhood stories. But, as I thought about the word in a different context and how it relates to service, a new picture emerged for me. That is, how service impacts our community and beyond. It is something much more than a catalyst, or synergy, it is something personal, spiritual, and a positive movement forward. It is something that touches people’s lives personally. It touches their soles. It is intangible and there is something magical about it that goes beyond the tangible.

High school students see this. They see the impact of an act, whether negative or positive, and how it can impact the lives of their fellow students. This is powerful. The question is: how can we help encourage them in making choices to serve others?

I think we do it in two ways. One of the ways we do it is by supporting them in their academics and activities, which we do through scholarships, or financially supporting school programs and activities. The second is when we bring them into our own activities or participate in theirs.

One example is our speech contest. When they come to our meeting for the Speech Contest, they experience our meetings, and in that experience, we encourage them to think about service as they watch and hear about our work. With a topic like The Magic of Service we can help them think about the possibilities in their own sphere of influence, and

maybe beyond. It is a powerful way that we can encourage them to be in service and extend the magic beyond the walls of our own clubs.

To summarize, I am excited to see the energy of our students as they listen to their own thoughts about the possibilities of service and share it with us. For these reasons, I suggested "The Magic of Service" for this year's speech contest topic.

Sue Barrett of the Rotary Club of Roseville

I like this theme "The Magic of Service" because it encourages two things:

1. First and foremost it is a theme that allows a contestant to "make it personal." The contestant can speak to an audience about how their own service or service project impacts the life of others and how it affects them. They can speak about their own personal experience, which makes giving a speech a less frightening aspect. Public speaking is not easy and causes fear in many people.

2. They can also expand this theme to include people in general and how giving to others impacts those who are in need of help and how rewarding, ie "the magic," it is to help others. They can talk about all the ways that we can help others with service both nationally and internationally and the impact of this caring and service on world peace. It is both narrow and broad in scope and encompasses what Rotary is all about without knowing anything about Rotary. If a student can create a speech on this topic they are a future Rotarian in the making.

DeDe Cordell of the Rotary Club of Marysville

"The Magic of Service" is broad enough to allow students wide flexibility in their choice of what to speak about. They could talk about the Peace Corps, helping their elderly grandparents, volunteering in their community, or something else that speaks to them."

Anonymous Author on the Internet

Service to others can indeed feel magical. It has the power to create positive change, build strong communities, and bring a sense of fulfillment and purpose to both the giver and receiver. Whether it's through small acts

of kindness or larger efforts, helping others can make a significant impact. Have you experienced this magic in your life?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING A FIRST CLASS SPEECH:

Brainstorm and Research Potential Topics.

Do a Google search on your topics.

If you find something of interest, use a “**screenshot**” and print it. Google “Screen Shots” if you are not aware of how to do it.

This makes a quick and fast way to research your speech and collect information.

Create and memorize your Introduction and Conclusion but not word for word.

Memorize each as a story. Grab your audience’s attention with something of interest in the Introduction and Conclude with something of interest to the audience that reflects back on the speech and speech theme.

Use **key words and develop stories** around the key words for the main section of your speech. Then add or drop key word stories during your presentation to keep your speech within time limits of 5 to 8 minutes.

Note: You will be given “**Timer Alerts**” of **Green at 5 minutes, Yellow at 7 minutes, and Red at 7 minutes and thirty seconds. You will be disqualified or restricted to Fourth Place if you go under 5 minutes or over 8 minutes in your speech.**

Be sure to **talk to your audience**. Rotate your vision throughout the audience and look into their eyes. Make your audience feel you are telling your key word stories to all of them personally.

Remember not to **overemphasize or use facts over and over** in your speech without adding background information and interesting support stories to go with the facts. Keep in mind providing entertainment and fascinating ideas is far more interesting than making a speech based completely on dry facts. Add humor and personal observations if at all possible. Remember, if it isn’t interesting to you, it will not be interesting to your audience.

Talk to your audience as if you are talking to a friend. Remember, the excitement you have for your topic will be reflected right back to you from your audience.

Do not memorize the words to your speech word for word. **Tell stories based upon your keywords.** There is nothing more boring than listening to a speech that has been either memorized or read to the audience.

Try to convey to the audience that you are really excited about the topic no matter how **nervous** you are. In many ways the audience will appreciate your nervousness in a positive way, but they will be completely unmoved by someone simply reporting facts after facts all in a row.

Use gestures and walk around if you feel comfortable doing it. Think about how boring a presentation on an overhead projector is with the teacher simply sitting at the projector and lecturing.

Have a good time with your speech and your audience will too. Be enthusiastic and have fun. Your enthusiasm about your topic will be far more impressive to your judges than any amount of boring facts.

A really interesting way to practice your speech is to present and record it on **Zoom**. The other thing I do is **practice my speech as I ride my road bike** going from keyword to keyword as I bike around the Buttes. I am sure anyone who hears me thinks I am a little crazy.

TOASTMASTERS CLUB ABBREVIATED KEY POINTS for OUTSTANDING SPEECHES

The Main Question?

The audience always has an unspoken question: **“What’s in it for me?”** Within the first minute, you need to answer their question and let them know why they are listening to you. Keep this point in mind as you develop your speech.

Better yet, attract their interest. **Give them an “interesting” reason to listen to you.**

Create an alluring **speech title of five words or less.**

Jump right into your presentation. You have **30 seconds to capture your audience’s attention.** Use your first few seconds wisely with a quick quip, question, an anecdote, or a self-effacing story. Done with the right tone, being vulnerable or playfully self-deprecating gets the audience on your side from the start.

Include humor in your speech. The quickest way to break down the invisible walls between the speaker and the audience is humor.

Streamline your presentation. Don't try to provide too much information.

Use storytelling to establish conflict. If you start with "Life is good, things are great, and I look forward to the rest of my life," people start looking forward to walking out. Instead, use stories to illustrate how to overcome or strive for something. For example, describe an unfolding problem, such as arriving late at the airport. The audience can then review their life path of arriving late or facing other stressful situations. The story allows them to join you, listen, learn, and be entertained by character development.

Pauses. Provide room in your speech to applause, slow down, and wait for your audience to appreciate what you have said.

Activities. Because people remember 80% of what they are and do (as opposed to what they hear), give them something to practice. Pose a question and ask for a show of hands.

Commit it to memory. Once you have decided what you want to say, crafted a strong speech, and incorporated some additional polish, focus on what is often the most difficult aspect, **memorize your key words and the ideas for the stories that go with them.**

A strong opening and a memorable closing should be your primary focal points. Whether building a sentence or a speech, keep in mind the most impactful points lie at the beginning and at the end.

Circular structure. The circular speech structure, where the ending picks up the threads of the opening. The verbiage from the opening can be woven into the conclusion, supporting the speech with symmetry and balance.

Try not to use unnecessary words like **AH, UM, and ER.**