

HOW TO GIVE A KILLER WEDDING SPEECH

It's the moment your guests have been waiting for! Create a heartfelt speech with these top tips...

We have seen it all at Blame Her Ranch when it comes to wedding speeches....some are more unique than others. But let's face it, giving a speech in front of 100 to 200 guests can be really daunting. So here are some tips on both flow and speech content that will make anyone a star.

1. OPEN WITH A STARTLING STATEMENT OR QUESTION. Don't lead with a joke or a reference to how nervous you are. The goal is to engage your audience, not make it a boring one-way message. You'll lose them if you do this.

2. ADDRESS YOUR AUDIENCE. Concentrate on your audience and how you want them to feel. This will help you to speak from the heart, allowing your speech to do what it's supposed to do: Make the couple feel special while also engaging the audience.

3. ZERO IN ONE TO THREE POINTS. A top guideline is to select one to three aspects of the newlyweds that you love and appreciate along with no more than three short stories to illustrate each of these points (or that one point). The simple, succinct story or stories about the bride and groom will work best. This is an excellent way to structure your speech and keep your message focused.

4. REHEARSE. THEN REHEARSE SOME MORE. The better prepared you are, the more confident you'll be and the better your speech will be. A good rule of thumb is to practice the speech enough that you can remember the points you want to make and the order in which you want to make them. That way, you can look out to the crowd and make eye contact every so often.

5. RECORD YOURSELF PRACTICING. Use your phone to take a video of yourself practicing. It can be a little uncomfortable to watch yourself, but you'll be able to identify

distracting mannerisms, such as the verbal pauses 'um', 'uh', and 'like.'" It's also a good idea to practice your speech in front of someone else. A second opinion can help you craft your piece and make it that much stronger.

6. LAY OFF THE BOOZE. Although it may be tempting to look for some liquid courage, alcohol definitely won't do you any favours. It may cause you to slur your speech and forget your lines, so wait until after your toast to celebrate. If you need a drink to loosen up the nerves or can't refrain from participating in a toast without being rude, stick to one glass of Champagne before you address the crowd.

7. LET NERVES WORK TO YOUR ADVANTAGE. A little nervousness can actually liven up your speech. The key is to harness that energy and communicate it in a positive, genuine way; tensing up to the point that you forget your words or panic won't make for a great presentation.

8. BE YOURSELF. Keep in mind that you're not putting on a show, only sharing your personal perspective. Trying too hard to force the funny can yield the opposite of the desired effect. Keeping it short and sweet, heartfelt and warm, and coming across as authentic and focused on the couple is something we are all capable of and generates some very wonderful moments.

9. KEEP IT SHORT. The ideal length for a speech is three to five minutes, with five minutes being the absolute maximum you should speak for. That's it.

10. DON'T EMBARRASS THE NEWLYWEDS. It's a wedding toast, not a roast. While this should go without saying, keep the bachelor/bachelorette party jokes out of it, and remember that grandma and possibly a few colleagues are in the audience. It's okay to look back at childhood and refer to something funny, but ask yourself if you'd like 200-plus of your closest friends knowing that story about you. **WIT**