

Covering a speech

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Get background information

- Speaker
- Topic

Arrive on time — or early

- Look around; size up the circumstances.
- Talk to people, gathering additional background.
- Position yourself.

Take careful notes

- Write fast.
- You can use a recorder.
 - Only as backup
 - Use counter to keep track.
- Use speaker's key words and phrases, even when you're not taking direct quotations.
- Listen for good quotations.
 - Get them verbatim.
 - Put them in quotation marks in your notes.

If an advance written text is available ...

- Follow the speaker's words on the text (while also watching the speaker and the crowd).
- If the speaker deviates from his text in a sentence you may be quoting, note the change on the text.
- Use the written text when writing the story. But resist the temptation to quote too much of it word for word.

Watch the audience

- Size
- Reactions
 - Body language
 - Questions
 - Comments
 - What interests the people listening?
It may also interest your readers.

Hang around afterward

- Observe.
- Ask questions.
 - Additional facts
 - Unanswered questions
 - Clarification

Follow the story

- Get people's reactions, especially if they've been accused.
- Verify facts.
- Collect information on recent news events that relate to the speech.
- Add perspective.

Write the story

- Focus on the important stuff. You don't have to include everything.
- **IMPORTANT:** Start the story with something interesting or important that the person said.
 - Not with the fact that he spoke
 - Not with a mere description of his topic

Write the story

- In a nut graf, identify the occasion for the speech and tell when and where.
- Attribute everything the speaker said to him or her. Use "said," not "says."
- Alternate paraphrases and direct quotations.
- Put quotations at the beginnings of paragraphs.
- Keep your opinions out of the story.

AP's lede on a presidential debate

OXFORD, Miss. (AP) — John McCain accused Barack Obama of compiling "the most liberal voting record in the United States Senate" on Friday night as the two rivals clashed on taxes, spending, the war in Iraq and more in an intense first debate of the White House campaign. "Mostly that's just me opposing George Bush's wrong-headed policies," shot back the Democrat.