

RYAN AVERY

CHAMPIONSHIP SPEECH BREAKDOWN

Speech Transcript:

I'm at the altar sweating in my wool suit. She is glowing in her white dress. [ST] [PD]

Asks me the most important question of my life. "Ryan, do you promise me?"

Before I make my commitment, I let my mind rewind like an old-school VHS tape. [SM]

And it takes me back to high school when I would plead with my mom to let me go to parties, "Mom, please let me go, there'll be no alcohol, I promise." [ST] [SM]

Mom in her nightgown and bunny slippers smiled sweetly, "Alright, I trust you." [PD]

Mr. Contest Chair, Fellow Toastmasters, anybody who's ever lied to mama before... [R3] [SM]

We're havin' fun in a field in small town Texas. My friend Taylor passes me another beer when bright lights freeze us in place. [PD] [SM]

The man behind the light, big belly over a belt buckle, lip full of dip, Sheriff Snodgrass. Caught us red-handed, red Solo cups in hand. [PD] [SM]

"Boys, it's your lucky night. Either fill this bag to the top with cigarette butts, or, we start callin' mamas." [PD] [SM]

We grabbed that bag and there we were, three macho teenagers, Taylor, Eric, and well, two macho teenagers and me. Crawling in a semi-sober state collecting soggy cigarette butts all night. [H] [R3] [PD] [SM]x2

Next morning we took that bag, we dropped it off at the station, there is some angry southern woman yelling in a nightgown and...**bunny slippers**. [CB] [PD] [SM]

Like a human bulldozer, mom plows through the crowd, “Son, what happened?” [PD] [SM]

“Mom, if you ever worried about me smoking, **don’t**. Guys and I had to pick up five pounds of cigarette butts.”

“Why Ryan?”

“There was alcohol at the party, mom.”

“Son I am disappointed. Worse, I can’t believe you. **Trust is a must**. Times have changed. When dad and I were your age, **we picked up seven pounds**.” [CB] [SM]x2

It took **me** a long time to earn mom’s trust back. And **after a summer** of her house arrest, it was **my** senior year and **I** became a wannabe entrepreneur. [ST] [SM]

This man offered **me** buckets of money to build **him** a website. New car here **I** come.

I spent weeks hunched in a chair glued to a screen typing on a Cheeto-stained keyboard. [H] [R3] [PD] [SM]

I finished. We met, handed over the files, he checked for his checkbook, couldn’t find it. Promised he would send a check over immediately. [PD] [SM]

No problem, we shook hands, **I’ll** get paid in a couple of days. Well a couple days passed, and where **I’m** from, **handshakes mean something**.

I called him, his phone’s disconnected. **I** googled him, he gave **me** a fake name, what? **I** complained to mom and do **you** know **what she said?** “**Trust is a must**, isn’t it, son?” [CB] [SM]x2

Don’t **you** hate when **parents are right?** Like one of those annoying hotel alarm clocks it woke **me** up. [Q] [SM]

How was **I** supposed to expect a man to keep a handshake when **I** couldn’t even keep a promise to mom? [Q]

I learned a promise is only as good as the person who makes it.

I was finally able to leave small town Texas and I went to college in Colorado. And I met the girl. [ST] [SM]

Tall, curly hair, a tattoo or two...(four)...[R3] [PD]

She is beautiful and I'm just some punk with pimples. And after a few hours of laughing, she is bringing-home-to-mama material.

A couple dates later I was up front and honest, "Chelsea, I'm not lookin' for a girlfriend, I'm lookin' for a wife. I'm leavin' the country and won't be back for seven months, and, I want kids. Warning, though, this, twelve pounds at birth." Sorry mom. [H]x2 [SM]x2

I have no idea how I convinced that girl to be my girlfriend, but I did. And we started building our foundation of trust three thousand miles apart. I wrote her a hand-written letter every day while I was gone.

I doodled what our future kids would look like, dreamed of still holding her hand, at ninety. Decided no bunny slippers. [H] [PD] [SM]x2

When I got back home, I met with Chelsea's parents and I got that seal of approval. I told them, "One day, I'll have more business experience. I'll do my best raisin' a couple of twelve-pound babies, I will love that girl when her curls turn grey." [R3] [PD] [SM]

Before the wedding my mom reminded me that Trust is a Must if I want this marriage to last. [CB] [SM]

I am at the altar, sweating in my wool suit, and Chelsea is glowing in her white dress. [CB] [PD]

"Chelsea, I promise."

Mr. Contest Chair...

SPEECH STATS:

Word Count: 743

Speech Length: 6:45

Title: Trust is a Must

Click [here](#) to watch the speech

COLOR KEY

- **Humor [H] - x 15**

This includes only parts that received genuine laughter from the audience. Laughter varies in intensity.

This speech averaged **2.22 LPMs** (Laughs Per Minute) and **49.53 WPL** (Words Per Laugh).

First laugh came at **0:38** of the speech.

He used a lot of misdirection and where he'd hit you with some unexpected humor. It worked well.

Nice use of humor tags as well. When he mentions that he was a 12-pound baby, he follows up with, "Sorry mom." That's an example of a humor tag. It's a way to prolong the laughter on an already funny joke (the one that came right before).

- **Foundational Phrase [FP] - x 3**

Foundational Phrase for this speech: "**Trust is a Must**"

The speech title was also the same as the Foundational Phrase and was heard 2 additional times as he was introduced. Those aren't included in this total, but the audience sure heard 'em.

Other notable and related phrases:

- "Trust" - Apart from the FP, Ryan used the word "Trust" 3 additional times which keeps the theme of "Trust" flowing throughout the speech.

- **"You"; "Your"; "We"; "Us"; "Our" - x 2**

I included these words that were directly aimed at the audience, dialogue excluded (character and internal). Talking *to* the audience will be more "you/your" focused. This could mean abstract ideas, "imagine this..." hypotheticals, concepts that describe how something works, etc. Those will naturally use more "you/your" words.

- **"I" or "Me" or "My" or "Myself" - x 54**

The original reason for tracking this stat was the thought that it might be useful to compare with the amount of “You” focused words. Turns out, it is. Just not in the way I originally thought.

The theory was, if this number was much greater than “You” focused words, it would show that the speaker was more “*me, me, me*” focused and not tailoring the message to the audience.

While that is a possibility, what I’ve found thus far is that it tells more about the content of the speech. More specifically, it tells us that there are personal stories being told.

**The total number counted does not include in-story character dialogue.

- **“Ladies and Gentlemen” or “My Friends” [MF] - x 1**

The speaker used “Fellow Toastmasters” to address the audience.

- **Physical Descriptions or VAKS [PD] - x 14**

Descriptive physical characteristics of people, things, and locations. The ones I included were any overt words that described the setting for where the speaker was at during the story, where the speaker wanted to take the audience, or descriptions of people in the scene.

Describing complex processes may also be included since they are intended to make it easier for the audience to imagine.

Physical in this case is what was heard, smelled, and what was seen. It also means that “*We were at my house*” is not enough—this requires specifics that are intended to paint a picture in the minds of the audience. I intentionally left out what was felt emotionally or metaphorically.

- **Callbacks [CB] - x 8**

Humorous and other. It’s common for speakers to derive humor from callbacks to *something* or *someone* from the speech journey. Foundational Phrases after the first one are essentially [callbacks](#) as well.

The idea of a callback is to move on from “it” (the eventual callback) so the audience is no longer thinking about it, and then call it back later so it’s an “A HA!” moment of familiarity. For that reason, only *some* of the Foundational Phrases may be included, and some may not. Normally the Foundational Phrase (subsequent ones after the first) get counted in the Callback section, as was the case in this speech.

- **Rule of Three [R3] - x 5**

The [rule of three](#) is all inclusive. Whether used for [comedic](#) effect or not.

It's common to see the Rule of Three used all at once in a single sentence such as, "*He was tall, strong, and mean.*"

- **Questions [Q] - x 3**

Questions directly aimed at the audience (rhetorical or not).

The original intent of the Questions category was to include only thoughtful questions—things that made the audience reflect on their lives. However, even benign or rhetorical questions aimed at the audience can help build a connection to the speaker, just as addressing the audience as "My Friends" or "Ladies and Gentlemen" does. Because of that, those types of questions were included as well.

One of the questions Ryan asked could have gone either way. It was immediately following the conclusion of the story about the guy who got a free website.

This one: How was I supposed to expect a man to keep a handshake when I couldn't even keep a promise to mom?

It was essentially his own inner dialogue but at the same time it seemed like an audience-posed question. For that reason, I included it.

- **Time Transitions [TT] - x 5**

Transition words that indicated that there was a time change from the speaker's point of view. The idea is to show progression from one point in the speaker's life to another. So, if there are multiple time transitions within the same story, they may or may not be counted. These help to prepare the audience for a change in the story in order to prevent confusion.

- **Stories [ST] - x 3**

This includes all stories told throughout the entire speech. Some stories may be slightly exaggerated, but the idea is that the speaker is telling the audience a story that happened, either in their life or somebody else's. This does not include metaphorical stories, intentionally exaggerated tales or things like "Imagine you are..."

In this speech there were 3 core stories. However, 1 of the stories was broken up into 2 parts during the speech—at the very beginning and at the very end. Because they were part of the same story, I did not count it as an additional story.

- **Stage Movement [SM] - x 25**

This section covers how many times the speaker moved to a different place on the stage during the speech. Minor movements for in-story character changes (for dialogue) or for small side steps for illustrating points or addressing different parts of the audience will not

be counted. I'll also keep track of anything else that's notable about the speaker's stage movements.

***Initials were put at end of sentence if multiple Color Key elements were in the same sentence.

Observations:

- **Props:** Ryan did not use any physical props. He instead used a variety of gestures to help tell his stories. At the end of the speech, I didn't once think, "Gee, that sure could have used a prop or two."
- **Non-verbal Communication:** Regardless of how "theatrical" they were, he used some advanced non-verbal communication. We view the speech as audience members and they appear so natural, but the amount of skill it took to implement them should not be understated. One particular example that illustrates the point well is when he says the line, "*Warning, though, this, twelve pounds at birth.*" When he says "*this*" he does that gesture with his hand to show that he is referring to himself. It's subtle because it's precisely what you'd expect to see if someone were to say what he said, but under this circumstance in front of an audience of 1k+, and being recorded, it is by no means easy to make it look so natural. See these other sequences as well [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) for a few additional examples. Pay close attention to the combination of his facial expressions, hand gestures, and body posture. Very fluid and natural.
- **Descriptive Hand Gestures:** This could easily be combined with the section above about non-verbal communication, but here I want to highlight his descriptive gestures including when he said, "*Doodled what our future kids would look like*"; "*dreamed of still holding her hand*"; "*...love that girl 'til her curls turn grey.*"
- **Showing Us:** I liked his use of sound effects and showing us the characters in action. For instance, the sheriff when he spits on the floor in the middle of dialogue. This was done well. He might have got some ideas from [Randy Harvey's Fat Dad](#) speech as well, including the spit sound effect and this line in particular, "[Boyyyyysss...](#)" and a [similar line](#) from Randy's speech.
- **Word Craft:** You can tell he put a lot of thought and precision into his word choice. It was well-crafted even if it went unnoticed. Well, Ryan, I noticed it and I appreciate it.
 - **Alliteration:** "...smiled sweetly"; "having fun in a field..."; "big belly over a belt buckle"; "Crawling in a semi-sober state collecting soggy cigarette..."; "Checked for his checkbook"; "...college in Colorado."; "...punk with pimples"

- **Rhyming:** From the Foundational Phrase to various descriptions throughout the speech. “Trust is a must”; “Bright lights...”; “lip full of dip”
- **Misc. :** “I will love that girl when her curls turn grey.” Say that line a few times. It’s pretty darn poetic.
- **Character Dialogue:** He let character dialogue do most of the storytelling. He didn’t narrate what they said, he showed us it live.
- **Stepping on Laughter:** He did not talk over the laughter. That is, he let them laugh before continuing with his speech. The 7-pounds of cigarette butts’ joke was a clear-cut example of this. He paused for about 10 seconds so the audience could finish laughing (see [here](#)). That’s impressive work to hold back.
- **Time Goes By:** A common element in the championship speeches is that you get a sense that time has gone by from the initial hook to the time that the conflict gets resolved. A journey so to speak, one that you get to be a part of. In this speech Ryan starts out at the altar, then takes us back to where this chapter in his life began, as a young high school kid losing the trust of mom, then time goes by and he gets burned by someone who betrayed him (karma?), then he goes off to college and meets his future wife, and then he takes us back to the altar where the speech began. The speech was just 6 minutes 45 seconds long, but it felt like I went on a life’s journey.
- **Emotional:** This speech included emotional moments (when talking to Chelsea’s parents) and I believe this is one of the most difficult things to do right. Some speakers hit the emotional part too hard and end up leaving the audience in a low state. This speech had an emotional tinge but craftily avoided detonating an emotional nuke.
- **Powerful Sentence:**
 - *“I learned a promise is only as good as the person who makes it.”*
- **Gurus and Side Characters:**
 - **Gurus:** Ryan’s Mom was the Guru. She gave him the advice, “Trust is a Must” and it came exclusively from her each of the 3 times it was referenced in the speech.
 - **Side Characters:** Taylor, Eric, Sheriff Snodgrass, Website Thief, Dad, the “Crowd” at the police station, Chelsea and Chelsea’s parents were all side characters. Side characters are part of the stories but don’t directly contribute to a learning moment. This isn’t a problem, just an observation. Side characters help give depth to a story.
 - A Guru is someone or something in the speech that teaches the speaker (and ultimately the audience) something meaningful. As a speaker, you don’t want to be the wise Guru. You want to be the dolt who learns from the guru(s), and that’s who end up teaching the audience as well. **Tip:** Self-deprecation can be an important element in allowing the guru to shine.
- **Foundational Phrase:** “Trust is a Must” was the Foundational Phrase. There was absolutely no question as to what the Foundational Phrase for this speech was. And boy did that save me time! Thanks Ryan! Another point about it was that it rhymed and was weaved in unassumingly throughout the speech. It did not feel forced at all. Well done.

Another note about the Foundational Phrase that I found interesting and may very well be a

technique he stumbled upon, was how the 3 FP were used in the speech. The first was him being reprimanded by his mom and her telling him via in-character dialogue, the second was her telling him in an “I told you so” sort of way through character dialogue (again), and then finally she reminds him before the wedding. Only, the final time it is delivered, it’s not through in-character dialogue, but him telling us what she told him before the wedding. What this did is distance the mom (important because she is the Guru of this speech) from the present moment. Imagine getting advice from someone who is alive and well—in other words, just another imperfect human being like you and me. Now, imagine getting advice from someone who has since past and is alive through memories only—the memories are long-lasting and infallible, and thus held in higher esteem. Could be that I’m reading into this too much but interesting to say the least. He also put his hand on his hip as a sort of Foundational Gesture and as a means to show his change of character to mom—*except* for the final time it was used.

- **Explicit Learning Moment:** Ryan explicitly told us in his speech what the learning moment for him was. He said, *“I learned a promise is only as good as the person who makes it.”* That is his definition of “trust is a must” in his own words based on how he interpreted it after he experienced a hardship firsthand (getting stiffed by the fraud guy).
- **Fake Laughter:** When he was talking about how he was 12 pounds at birth and then says, *“sorry mom,”* he was chuckling along with the audience. See it [here](#). He did a great job of making it look authentic. And I don’t mean *fake* in a bad sense or in the sense that it wasn’t funny when he first decided to make it part of his speech, I mean it’s obvious that he practiced the hell out of this speech and the fake laughter might as well have been just another sentence he had to memorize. Les Browne comes to mind as someone who does this extremely well. He does this charismatic, childish laugh (see [here](#)) during his keynotes that I can tell are part of a “script” that he has done countless times before, but that is extremely believable.
- **Tie Up Loose Ends:** He closed it in the same way he opened it, while at the altar in his wool suit, Chelsea at his side, “Ryan, do you promise me?” At the end he answered the question to tie that part up: *“Chelsea, I promise.”*

Feedback / Criticism:

- **Too Goofy?** His demeanor was a little goofy at times. I felt that it fit, but it may have lessened the impact of his serious moments. It’s almost as if there was too much contrast in his personality which could potentially bring up questions about his authenticity. After all, trust is a must. Needless to say, he did commit fully to his “wackiness” and it worked.
- **Flat Joke:** He used a callback joke about his Mom’s bunny slippers...but it fell flat. During the part when he was talking about his long-distance relationship he said, *“...decided no bunny slippers.”* It wasn’t the audience, either. He put a lot of effort into a joke that somebody should have told him to cut.

- **Bad Timing for Joke:** When his mom first tells him *“Trust is a Must”* at the police station, the next sentence is a funny line. The humor line was: *“Son I am disappointed. Worse, I can’t believe you. Trust is a must. Times have changed. When dad and I were your age, we picked up seven pounds.”*

I felt that this minimized the seriousness of that message, which ultimately was the CORE MESSAGE of the speech. The entire speech hinges on that message. It goes from important to silly in seconds. I’m not saying it wasn’t funny because it was, but when it comes at the expense of your speech’s foundational message, I’m not sure I’d risk it. Yet...he won, so maybe it was worth the risk.

- **Unanswered Question:** When talking to Chelsea about how he was looking for a wife, he said *“I’m leavin’ the country and won’t be back for seven months.”* This left me wondering *why*. It created a question in my mind that ultimately went unanswered. Why did he leave? Where did he go?
- **Talking to Audience:** I felt this speech lacked the 1 on 1 connection with Ryan and the audience. There were slivers of it like when he said, *“Don’t you hate when parents are right?”* and the part about Chelsea’s tattoos, but it felt a little one sided with talking about himself versus addressing the audience.

The following may provide more clues as to why:

The use of “You” focused words totaled 2 out of a 743-word speech. Now, that statistic doesn’t always tell the whole story since it usually means the presence of personal stories, as is the case in this speech, but I still felt this connection to the audience was missing.

He only addressed the audience directly one time which was during the standard “Fellow Toastmasters” greeting.

The nature of the questions used during the speech. There were technically 3 total questions asked, although none were thought-provoking and directly asked of the audience. One question was a humor line, another question was his own internal dialogue as a character mid-story, and the other was a rhetorical *“do you know what she said?”*

- **Ending:** I have mixed feelings about the ending. In theory, I feel that it is built on a strong foundation. It ended as it began and it’s a powerful and meaningful moment in his or anyone’s life (marriage), but it didn’t feel as strong as I would have hoped. It felt too abrupt. With that said, this is nitpicking on my part since the speech is constructed quite well.
- **Exiting the Stage:** After the final line, which was more of an emotional (in a positive way) moment, he then proceeded to run off the stage in a goofy way. To me it was incongruent with that moment. I get that the speech is technically over, but not in the minds of the audience. I think the exit should match the final sentiment, so it doesn’t conjure up questions of sincerity. He won so I suppose it didn’t matter, but I noticed this.
- **Theatrics / YouTube Hate:** This speech had several comments about how this was a theatre performance, and I can understand where they’re coming from. He put a lot of “enthusiasm” into his characters and storytelling. I get it. I remember thinking something similar when I first watched this speech a few years ago.

With that said, the speech's structure and the elements used within are about as perfect (*on paper*) as you can get when it comes to crafting a speech.

The delivery on the other hand is a whole other thing. There were indeed some questionable over-the-top moments (see my section above about being "too goofy") and this is what may have rubbed some people the wrong way. For me, though, *after* having analyzed it, I truly appreciate the work that went into it and it's a worthy winner in my eyes.

- **Perfection:** Usually I'm able to find a hiccup during these championship speeches, like a mispronounced word or a repeated word (false start), but this speech was about as perfectly delivered as can be. Good job Ryan!

A BOOK FOR OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING...

If you've wanted to get involved in public speaking but are having trouble dealing with the fear and nervousness that comes with it, please check out my [book](#).

The fear of public speaking was absolutely debilitating for me. The advice I got when I started out was "Just do it!"

Well, I took that to heart and started "doing it," and each and every week I was getting opportunities to speak. But for some reason the fear was getting worse every time I got in front of an audience.

To tell you the truth, this was demoralizing and beyond frustrating. Who wants to put in time and effort into something and get nothing back? That's what my journey to overcoming the fear felt like.

It took over 7 months of this torture before I got my very first breakthrough that allowed me to START chipping away at the fear. I had to scratch and claw to figure out something that actually worked for me.

And that's who this book is for. It's for someone who is not lacking the motivation to try, but for someone that wants to skip all the B.S. and get to the root cause as quickly as possible.

I wrote the book for people that want to be able to speak in front of an audience but not have to feel like a sailboat floating in the middle of the ocean during a hurricane.

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