

Planning your talk

This guide covers:

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What does a S4S talk look like?

Speakers for Schools (S4S) talks are inspirational events that allow speakers to share their unique insights and advice with students as someone leading in their industry or discipline, to help broaden horizons and encourage students in their potential. They are also a chance for a real conversation with figures who are shaping the world today – ranging from real stories of how a speaker got to where they are, to how their industry is changing society as we know it.



Logistics and Planning Brief

S4S talks should be **one hour long** with a large student audience (assembly style), followed by a Q&A session. Themes and formats should be agreed with speakers in advance of the talk during a phone call. They are bespoke and depend on the individual speaker, but fall into broader themes which can be seen on pages 4 and 5 of this guide. Most speakers provide unique insights as successful figures in their field to help inform and encourage students, while others can be more specialised.

Below are key steps to follow when the planning for your talk:

1. Once introduced to your speaker/their office you will need to agree the date and time of the talk. Please be sure to let S4S know when this is confirmed.
2. It is a requirement to have a phone call with your speaker/their office. Talks where speakers and schools have had a call often result in a stronger impact on students and a more successful session. During the phone call you should agree:
 - The format of the talk (more information on page 3)
 - Themes and key messages of the talk (more information on page 4)
 - Please be sure to advise your speaker on the audience for the talk (size, age, prior subject knowledge etc) and how you hope they will benefit from the session - this will help speakers prepare for their visit
 - Does your speaker have any further expectations? For example, a meet and greet with students, a tour of the school, a meeting with the headteacher/SLT
3. We do ask that students are prepared ahead of the talk so they know why the speaker is attending and who they are, it is also a great opportunity to have students thinking about the talk and potential questions. Our **Q&A Prep Sheets** can be found here.

Please see our On the day hosting guide for top tips on how best to host your speaker, including the final event checklist, top tips for introducing your speaker and hosting Q&A!



Talk Formats

There are two main formats to be considered for your talk, be sure to advise your speaker on the format that would best suit your students. Be sure to agree the format with the speaker ahead of the talk and follow the below guidance.

All S4S events should be **one hour long**.

Both formats require an element of Q&A with the audience which should be moderated by a teacher/member of SLT. More information about moderating Q&A and ensuring the talk is hosted well can be seen in our **On the day hosting guide here**.

Fireside Chat/ Interview

Ideal for a more informal conversation led by student questions, not requiring any slides or a set 'talk'.

- Speaker and school have a phone call to agree the focus of the 'interview'; in some instances, questions need to be agreed in advance
- The interviewer could be a teacher or confident student; students can submit questions in advance
- Interview takes place for 30-45 minutes depending on speaker and school preference
- The session is then opened to any impromptu questions from the audience for the remainder of the hour

Talk with Q&A

Ideal for speakers with a key message, subject or story they want to use as the focus of the event (A/V optional)

- Speaker and school have a call to agree the focus of the talk and the context for their students so it strikes the right chord
- The talk itself is about 20-25 minutes followed by a 30 min Q&A with the audience
- Q&A should be actively moderated and driven by the teacher, with 5 pre-prepared student questions to get the ball rolling
- Students should be ready to take part in a Q&A. Prep sheets are available on our website [here](#)



Talk themes: Outcomes for students

The focus and key messages of your talk should be agreed with the speaker in advance. Below are our suggested talk themes which our speakers use to frame their talk, we have also outlined the potential outcomes for your students to help ensure your talk has the most impact.

1. Industry insights

With a key focus on demystifying and/or challenging misconceptions, speakers can help translate their work in a way that leaves students thinking differently about the industry, how it affects the world and 'who' might be interested in it, in the future. Although it can link to future careers, all S4S talks are meant to be useful for a diverse student audience so a talk should focus on sparking a new understanding of and insights on the industry, over a vocational talk on job roles.

Outcomes for students: This can engage your students as to bigger issues, ingredients for success (in general) and to raise their aspirations. This may alert students to opportunities they may not have been aware of.

2. Life Lessons

This is a popular theme where speakers share their life advice and experiences to help show students their own learned lessons that will help students see their potential and life opportunities differently. Often successful figures can do this by sharing candid reflections that might challenge what students think is required for success.

Outcomes for students: This kind of talk is ideal for a broad student group. The hope is that regardless of the exact angle the speaker takes, and no matter their background, it will help young people relate to the speaker, draw on their experiences and raise their aspirations.

3. Inspiring Action

This kind of talk will be driven by speakers' passions and an area where they hope to inspire action, such as democracy, the importance of participation, the environment, public service, human rights etc. – all encouraging student interest and empowerment in global or local issues. Talks are designed to be a dialogue and should welcome other views, leaving students more confident in their role in the future and inspire them to think about wider society.

Outcomes for students: Talks of this nature engage students as to how issues are manifested, how progress can be measured and implications for students as potential activists for change.

4. Own Your Strengths

Some speakers have a much more personal message for students who are often at an age where they can be navigating difficult social issues, identity issues and trying to figure out where they fit in the world.

Outcomes for students: Talks of this nature help students to see past their identity, backgrounds or circumstances as a barrier to their potential or success. Whether it's about embracing their accent or ethnicity or challenging the status quo on gender expectations.

5. Expert Insights

This talk is ideal for speakers expected to give students access to expert insights and knowledge that they wouldn't get elsewhere, providing students with a crash course in a specific area. These talks are useful, especially if the pairing has been made for a smaller, focused student group but can appeal to broader student groups also.

Outcomes for students: Ideal for a smaller group on a more tailored topic where the speaker is aware of their knowledge level. Despite having a subject focus, the hope is to engage young people as to bigger issues and how a subject or specific topic can relate to a wider picture.

FAQs

Who should organise a S4S talk?

Given the nature of the speakers we work with, especially as a charity, the headteacher/senior leadership team will need to help with off-timetable arrangements and should greet the speaker on the day. However, a deputy staff member can assist with coordinating the logistics in the lead up.

How long should a S4S talk be?

S4S talks should be one hour long with plenty of interaction - more information about formats can be seen on page 3.

What will the speaker talk about?

The content and key messages of the talk should be agreed with your speaker in advance. Talks are bespoke and depend on the individual speaker, but fall into broader themes which can be seen on pages 4 and 5. Most speakers provide unique insights as successful figures in their field to help inform and encourage students, while others can be more specialised.

How many students should we have in the audience?

Talks should be a large assembly style session with a large student audience unless a smaller group is requested by your speaker.

How should I introduce the speaker?

It is important to introduce the speaker and nature of the event to your students. On the day, please be sure to review the introduction with your speaker if possible. A template introduction can be found in our **On the day hosting guide**.

How can I prepare students for the talk?

We do ask that students are prepared ahead of the talk so they know why the speaker is attending and who they are, it is also a great opportunity to have students think about the talk and potential questions. Our **Q&A prep sheets** can be found **here**.

What's your number 1 tip for a successful S4S talk?

Having a phone call with the speaker/their office and agreeing on the key messages and themes of the talk is crucial to ensure a successful talk. Find out more about what should be agreed in your phone call on page 2.

Do your speakers have DBS checks?

Our speakers are not DBS checked as they are guests hosted by teachers at the school and should not to be left alone by teachers, unsupervised with students. Their visit should be treated within school guidelines for visitors to the school.

About Speakers for Schools

Speakers for Schools is a UK education charity launched in 2011 to help level the playing field for state secondary schools and their students by increasing access to inspiring talks and engagements with today's top figures and employers, as often seen in fee-paying schools. Speakers are high-profile leaders and experts donating their time and travel, keeping all engagements free of charge to our schools.

In 2017, the charity launched S4SNextGen, its portal connecting state schools with speakers' esteemed companies to offer work experience and related placements to those students who need it the most: **www.S4SNextGen.org**. We now have hundreds of placements opening-up with top employers for invaluable student workplace experiences.

The charity was founded by Robert Peston and has facilitated over 5,500 school talks and placements reaching over 600,000 young people to date. Chaired by Andrew Law with a board of trustees, the charity is funded by the **Law Family Charitable Foundation**.

Need extra help or advice? Get in touch with us at **team@speakers4schools.org**

