



## How to make Forest 'King' of the awards speech



By Susan Wloszczyna, USA TODAY  
MEMO TO: Forest Whitaker

*Oscar nominee, best actor for *The Last King of Scotland**

**Dear Forest,**

As Oscar night approaches Feb. 25, we have to tell you: The speech could use some work.

You have now won 21 awards for your turn as evil, charismatic Idi Amin in *The Last King of Scotland*. It is not outside the bounds of thinking that on Oscar night, you could very well win.

Even your admirer Peter Morgan, who wrote the screenplays for both *The Queen* and *The Last King of Scotland*, says: "There comes a moment where you want to say, 'Forest, you can't be surprised anymore. You have won everything else. It's not hubristic to turn up with a couple of remarks written down.' But he is an extraordinarily humble guy."

We asked Toastmasters International executive director Donna H. Groh to offer some tips based on your previous speeches. Give 'em heck, Forest.

**FORGETFUL FOREST:** [Lots of names to remember, Whitaker says](#)

**What you said**

**Golden Globes, Jan. 15, 2007**

"(Sighs) Yeah, this is great. Wow, this is — wow. Wow, OK. Thank you. You know, thank you, thank you, um, thank you for, for, for this award, for, for the best-actor award. ... It means a lot to me. Uh, I'm really happy to be included in the company of like Leo and Will, you know, and um, and um, haha, it's OK. ... And uhh, Leo again. So uhh, thanks, I want to thank 20th Century Fox, you've always been there for me. Tom, Jim, Christine, Peter Rice, um, Claudia Lewis, Nancy Utley, you know, everyone at DNA (Films), people that uh ... I want to thank the writer, Peter Morgan, who wrote this amazing character for me to play. I want to thank the director, Kevin (Macdonald), really, you know his vision (to) make this great film. I want to thank the producers, Andrea Calderwood, Lisa Bryer, I want to thank this amazing cast, you know James McAvoy, and Kerry (Washington) and all the people in Uganda, all the actors. Amazing Ugandan actors that helped me do this. And I want to thank my wife Keisha, my children, I hope you're watching. And uh, and God, and the ancestors that let me stand on their shoulders every day and guide me, whispering in my ear. Thank you."

**Tips from Toastmasters**

The key to every acceptance speech is gratitude, recognition and sincerity. In your Golden Globe and SAG Award speeches, you had good content and structure, but what you could have done better was control your delivery. Here are some tips for adding rhythm and pacing to your Oscar acceptance speech:

- Pause, smile and count to three before saying anything. ("One one-thousand, two one-thousand, three one-thousand. Pause. Begin.")
- Control filler words (ums and ahs). To do so, see above points: Practice, pause and breathe.
- Regarding names: Keep them to a minimum and get them right!
- Make your last line expendable, in case you are cut off.
- The role for which you are nominated doesn't lend itself to humor, so to make your Oscar-winning speech memorable, use a brief but touching anecdote from the filming of the movie, about the people involved or about some little-known fact.
- Mainly, your acceptance speech should represent you — as an actor and as a person.
- Write your speech as a script, and memorize it! Make the most of your acting skills.
- Practice, practice, practice! Rehearse with a timer and allow time for the unexpected.
- Begin by addressing the audience. It buys you time and calms your nerves. Remember, the audience is rooting for you.
- Concentrate on your message. You have important thoughts to convey, so focus on your speech, not on the television audience.