

## Podiums And Lecterns

After two political conventions I was ready to throw a chair into the television. I resisted only because I knew it would only mean I'd have to buy a new television, I wouldn't actually be harming the commentators and pundits. Was I annoyed by their pro-Obama stance? Yes, but that wasn't what made me so enraged. No, I was amazed by how many people don't know the difference between a podium and a lectern.

I would think that when students at journalism school are not learning the finer points of repeating Democrat talking points they might spend a minute or two on the proper use of the English language – but perhaps I expect too much of young people who got through liberal (and I do mean liberal) arts colleges where learning about every culture but one's own is the rule and not the exception. Still, I would like to think that there are one or two schools out there that don't pander to future Chris Matthews and Keith Olbermanns by expecting little of them. (Let me venture a guess that Hillsdale College is one that still has reasonable standards that must be met before one can receive a degree.)

For those of you who haven't yet pulled out your dictionaries – or who don't own one – a *podium* is something you stand *on*, while a *lectern* is something you stand *behind*. The lectern is the stand (usually wooden) with the slanted top on which the speaker's notes are placed while he gives his speech, lecture, or address. The podium is the raised platform on which the lectern is placed.

No one at CBS, NBC, ABC, CNN, MSNBC, or Fox News seems to know the difference, as both political conventions were full of references to speakers "approaching the podium" when they were, in fact, already walking across it. I never heard the word lectern used once, but I certainly heard the word podium misused quite a bit. Granted, this isn't a life-threatening issue, but Edwin Newman would be rolling over in his grave if he were dead.

At any rate, I'd appreciate it if someone who has contacts in the media would please advise the talking heads on television that a lectern is not a podium. And while I'm at it, may I suggest that Governor Palin learn how to pronounce nuclear. I'm not sure she needs to follow in the Jimmy Carter or George W. Bush footsteps *that* closely.

*Don Fredrick*  
*September 15, 2008*

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