

Impromptu

Approaching the Impromptu Speech

An impromptu speech is spontaneous, because it happens when the sudden need to give a speech arises. Sometimes these are informal, such as describing a company or person to someone on an elevator or bus, and sometimes they are formal, such as when someone with experience in an area is called on to answer a particular question. Impromptu speeches allow students to interpret the meaning of a prompt, often a quotation, proverb, or some concept or idea, and teach the audience about the relevance of that prompt to their own lives.

Brainstorm:

- 1). Break the prompt into elements (key words - nouns and verbs)
- 2). Assess the situation/meaning inherent in the prompt (big picture)
- 3). Think of relationships, such as causes and effects, as well as problems and solutions.
- 4). Align causes with consequences
- 5). For elements (#1), consider differences, similarities, and relationships
- 6). Determine a means of differentiating main points (cause-effect, past-present, present-future, internal-external, economic-social, etc.)

Organization:

1. Attention-getting device (introduction) – something that tickles the audience’s interest
2. Recite the prompt from the slip of paper
3. Provide an interpretation of the prompt (your speech’s main idea)
4. Preview your main points
5. Deliver your first main point, and provide examples that illustrate it
6. Reference your interpretation of the quotation as you conclude your first point and transition to your second point
7. Repeat steps 5 and 6 for a second and possibly third point
8. Review the main points
9. Conclude the speech by returning to the theme of your attention-getting device and giving the audience/judge a lasting impression on their lives.

Typical Subject Matter for Prompts

Philosophy/Movements - "values" (moral/good)
Business/Management/Leadership - "success"
Great Literature, Film, arts, etc. - "human condition"
History - "perspective"
Politics - "relationships"
Science/Theories - "discoveries," "understandings"

Advice: stay focused on the prompt, and do not overuse introductions or examples.