

Guidelines for Impromptu Speaking

Here are some guidelines that will help you organize and feel more confident with the impromptu method of delivery.

- Step One:** Prepare to Speak
You don't have to start speaking the minute you have been asked to. Take a deep breath, rise from your chair, and walk to the front of the room to the lectern. Use this time to gather and organize your thoughts.
- Step Two:** Determine your purpose
Try to develop one or two points as you walk to the lectern to begin speaking. Think about what point or points you want to make. Because you will have a very limited amount of time in which to prepare and speak, focus on one issue that you know well and can adequately address. Avoid complex issues or ideas about which you have limited knowledge.
- Step Three:** Support your purpose
Support your purpose or points with examples, narratives, or other supporting evidence. Regardless of the type of evidence you choose, you want to provide specific details for your audience so that you justify your position or purpose.
- Step Four:** Prepare the introduction
Develop an introduction. A brief sentence will suffice in an impromptu presentation. You might refer to the event at which you are speaking or to another comment that has recently been made.
- Step Five:** Prepare the conclusion
Finally, conclude the presentation. One of the most common mistakes in this method of delivery is that the conclusion often rambles. Follow the guidelines in Chapter 4 for an effective ending (be brief, clear, and memorable). You want to come to a definite stop. Simply restate your point, or points, and end with a memorable thought or a call to action.

Here are some additional considerations that will help you prepare for impromptu presentations:

- **Don't rush**
Take your time before you start to speak. Make sure your thoughts are clearly laid out in your mind before you begin speaking. Also, speak slowly and don't rush through the presentation.
- **Don't apologize**
Start your presentation with your introduction. Avoid statements such as, "You'll have to forgive me, I had little time to prepare today." Your audience will know this and they will not be expecting a masterpiece.
- **Focus on the topic**
Keep the focus of your presentation on the topic at hand. Remember your purpose and don't stray from it. It is also important that you avoid any negative remarks. Keep your mind on your subject matter and keep negative thoughts at bay.
- **Be Brief**
Remember, this is a brief presentation. Try to stay focused and avoid rambling. You don't have to say everything that you know about a particular topic. Choose your purpose, state your point or points, provide support, and then conclude.
- **Foresee situations**
If at all possible, try to anticipate those situations in which you may be called on to speak. From experience, you may know that you will have to report on your division's progress at certain staff meetings. Plan in advance what you would like to say if the situation presents itself.

The strategies discussed above will help you keep impromptu speaking in perspective. With a little practice and a few strategies, anyone can be an effective impromptu speaker.

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