

The National Forensic League offers the following explanation on the impromptu speaking ballot. It states:

*The Impromptu speech should be regarded as an original interpretation by the speaker of the designated topic as supported by varied materials and gives a contestant opportunity to be creative and imaginative. An impromptu speech should reveal the student's ability to organize his thoughts quickly and in a logical manner.*

*The contestant should be held accountable for strict adherence to the topic drawn and discounted severely for shifting to some other topic on which s/he might prefer to speak. The information presented should be well-chosen, pertinent, and sufficient to support the central thought of the topic.*

*The material should be organized according to some logical plan to produce a complete speech within the time allowed. Delivery should be free from marked defects in the mechanics of speech-poise, quality and use of voice, enunciation, fluency, bodily expressiveness-and should be effective in enlisting and holding the interest of the audience.*

*The best impromptu speech combines clear thinking, good speaking, and interesting presentation with respect to the subject chosen. Notes are not permitted.*

*There is no minimum qualifying time. Do not penalize a contestant for brevity unless he fails to cover his subject adequately. Maximum time is five minutes. Impose no penalty for overtime unless it is excessive.*

*There will be a five-minute preparation time. Impromptu topics will be chosen from proverbs, ordinary things, abstract words, events, quotations, and famous people.*

## Writing Strategies

### I. Introduction

#### A. Attention getter

Lead in

Quote, story, joke, Personal experience

Lead out

#### B. Preview of major points

### II. Body

#### A. First area of analysis

1. example

2. explanation/relevance to topic

#### B. Second area of analysis

1. example

2. explanation/relevance to topic

#### B. Third area of analysis

1. example

2. explanation/relevance to topic

### III. Conclusion

#### A. Review of major points

#### B. Refer back to attention getter and conclude

## Benefits/Harms Organization

i.e. Freedom

### I. Intro

#### A. Attention getter

-provide an example showing how freedom may have an impact on our lives. Also, briefly introduce the topic and state your view of its overall significance.

#### B. Preview

-list, in order, the headings of your major points. In this case, your points might be how freedom can be beneficial on an individual basis, and how it may be harmful, and how it may be beneficial to society as a whole.

### II. Body

#### A. How freedom may benefit the individual

1. give a basic overview of the concept
2. provide an example to back up your analysis
3. restate your basic thesis and explain relevance of example to topic

#### B. How freedom may be harmful at times (repeat steps #1-3 above)

#### C. How freedom is generally beneficial to society (repeat steps #1-3 above)

### III. Conclusion

#### A. Restate topic and reiterate that it is significant to all of us

#### B. Review major points

#### C. Refer back to attention-getter in concluding statement.

## **Types of Examples to Use in Your Impromptu Speech**

### **1. Personal experiences**

**-anecdotes, stories, trivia**

### **2. Philosophy**

**-establish a value criteria for analyzing the topic**

### **3. Historical**

**-be sure to have your facts straight**

### **4. Literary**

**-plays, novels, short stories, poems**

### **5. Other**

**-including politics, current events, sports, movies**

## How to Deal With Proverbs of Quotations

-Focus on the central meaning or "heart" of the quotation/proverb

-find the "KERNEL" (the central, essential part)

i.e. **"I may disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."**

--Voltaire

### **KERNELS**

**-Freedom of speech**

**-Freedom**

**-Open mindedness**

**-Respecting others**

**-Common enemies**

## Second Example of Structure

### **I. Introduction**

- A. Attention-Getter
- B. Lead in to the Topic
- C. Statement of Topic
- D. Thesis (interpret/define/identify the topic)
- E. Preview (for two reasons: A and B)

### **II. Reason A**

- A. Explanation of Logic
- B. Example to Illustrate
- C. Another example to illustrate
- D. Discussion of the relationship of the examples to each other and to the topic.

### **III. Reason B**

- A. Explanation of Logic
- B. Example to Illustrate
- C. Another example to illustrate
- D. Discussion of the relationship of the examples to each other and to the topic.

### **IV. Conclusion**

- A. Review Statement
- B. Restatement of Topic
- C. Restatement of Thesis
- D. Restatement of Attention Getter

**EXAMPLES****Type of Topic: famous person****Name: Jerry Garcia****Thesis:** Jerry Garcia, the recently deceased vocalist/songwriter/guitarist for the band The Grateful Dead, was a significant figure in contemporary American society:

- I. Because he was an influential musician
- II. Because he lived a self-destructive lifestyle

**Type of Topic: place****Place: Mount Everest****Thesis:** Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, is a significant place in the world.

- I. Because it is isolated from most of humankind
- II. Because it is extremely dangerous to climb.

**Type of Topic: proverb****Proverb: Revenge is a dish best served cold.****Thesis:** Revenge is best achieved in a cold-blooded manner.

- I. Because revenge is not taken in the heat of the moment --it is planned
- II. Because revenge is not a crime of passion--it is a crime of retribution.

## **To Practice for Impromptu**

- \*\*Practice with proverb or quotation books**
- \*\*Make a list of abstract words such as  
freedom, hate, or envy**
- \*\*Study a bit of history**
- \*\*Keep up with current events**
- \*\*Read literature carefully in your English**
- \*\*Be informed about the world around you  
-including the lives and careers of movie  
stars and political figures that run our  
world**



# REVIEW

## TOP NINE TIPS FOR SUCCESS IN IMPROMPTU SPEAKING

- 1.** Begin reading books of quotations or proverbs.
- 2.** Make a list of abstract words to interpret.
- 3.** When writing an impromptu speech, show how your topic affects the lives of your audience.
- 4.** Study the three part structure of an impromptu speech. It should have an introduction, body, and conclusion.
- 5.** Realize that the main areas of analysis can be either showing the benefits/harms of the topic or by showing examples of the topic.
- 6.** Examples can be found in personal experiences, philosophy, history, literature, or in current events.
- 7.** Proverbs need to be interpreted in one word or short phrase.
- 8.** Practice determining the "kernel" of the quotation.
- 9.** Practice giving impromptu speeches with peers or your coach.

## ACTIVITIES

- 1.** Make a list of words and quotations. As a class, try writing sample speech outlines on the same topics. Share your outline with the class. This will demonstrate the many creative ways a topic can be approached in impromptu.
- 2.** Ask one of your peers to write a topic for you. Give a speech to your peer. Then reverse the process and write one for your peer. He or she should then deliver a speech to you.

### SAMPLE TOPICS and WORDS

#### Remembering your childhood.

Monopoly  
Dr. Seuss  
Scrambled Eggs  
Checkers  
Father  
Band Aids  
Wallpaper  
Candy  
Frisbee  
Haircut  
Questions  
Respect  
Plaid  
Cotton  
Denim  
Music

#### The random

Cannibalism  
Paper  
Cults  
Mouse traps  
Tabloids  
Fossils  
Bootleg  
DNA  
Blindfolded  
Army  
Signature  
Tranquilized  
Wheelchair  
Deja vu  
Imagination  
Altruism  
Apathy

#### The abstract

Sanitized  
Light  
Finances  
Hibernation  
Violation  
Listen  
Gambling  
Understanding  
Thought  
Freedom  
Responsibility  
Infinity  
Virtue  
Marriage  
Routine