

Impromptu Speaking

Impromptu speaking is classified as a limited preparation (or limited prep) event in college forensics. It is most closely related to public address events, in that impromptu is a speech developed around the artifact provided to the competitor. Artifacts for impromptu are most often quotations, but can vary to include statues, fortune cookie fortunes, cartoons, or any other variety of items.

Impromptu speaking is a seven minute event, which includes the preparation of the speech. The general practice is that prep will last for two minutes and the speech will be five minutes, and PKD is the only organization which mandates at least four minutes of speaking time.

During preparation time, verbal time cues will be given to the competitor, and once speaking begins the competitor should receive hand signals indicating time in one minute increments until the final 30 seconds when additional hand signals are needed.

PKD-NCT Event Description:

Impromptu Speaking: Speakers will draw a topic sheet which contains two topics. They will have 7 minutes to prepare and deliver a speech using one of those topics. At least 4 minutes should be spent speaking. Topics will be selected from quotations, lyrics, proverbs, or cartoons. Contestants must wait outside of the room prior to speaking. Limited notes are permitted. Judges will provide time signals. (as read in http://www.pikappadelta.com/docs/2011_PKD_Tournament_Invitation.pdf)

AFA-NIET Event Description:

“An impromptu speech, substantive in nature, with topic selections varied by round and by section. Topics will be derived from quotations. Speakers will have a total of 7 minutes for both preparation and speaking. Timing commences with the acceptance of the topics sheet. Limited notes are permitted.” (as read in <http://www.mnsu.edu/cmst/niet/eventdescriptions-new09-10.htm>)

NFA Event Description:

“Contestants will receive short excerpts dealing with items of general interest, political, economic, and social issues. The contestant will have a total of seven minutes to divide between preparation and speaking. Students should speak for at least three minutes. All contestants in the same section shall speak on the same topic. Maximum 7 minutes.” (as read in <http://www.nationalforensics.org/rules-and-documents/nfa-rules-for-individual-events>)

2) A set of suggestions on how to coach the event;

Like many events, coaching impromptu depends on how comfortable or familiar the student is with the event to begin with, but some general suggestions are:

1. Maintain a set of “artifacts” for students to practice from, this should include some of the less commonly used artifacts like fortunes and cartoons.

2. Have students give multiple speeches in a single practice session and limit or refuse repeat examples, this helps the competitor grow their example base.
3. Help competitors create an “example base,” which is very similar in theory to files for extemporaneous speaking. Competitors should regularly be looking for new and additional examples to add to their repertoire. This can include movies, books, shows, current events, plays, art exhibits, theories, historical events or anything that is of interest and memorable to the competitor. This example base should be kept current and can be on note cards, in a notebook, in a file on a computer or any way that the competitor can regularly access the information with ease.
4. Have students give multiple speeches from the same quotation from different perspectives. There are many ways to interpret a quotation, so challenge the competitor to agree in their first speech, disagree in their second, agree with a different idea line on the third, etc. This will help student see that it is very easy to think about quotations (or whatever artifact is used) from multiple perspectives, which will help them stand out in rounds.
5. Help competitors develop arguments or a thesis for their speeches. Every speech should use the artifact to create a main argument or thesis that is proven through smaller arguments or main points. Much like students would use to write any sort of academic essay for class, a thesis supported by smaller arguments helps both organize the thoughts and the speech itself.
6. Help competitors understand how to balance their speeches. Balancing a speech is easily one of the most difficult aspects of giving an impromptu speech. A balanced speech is one that has the majority of time spent in the body of the speech, and each component of the body gets equal time. Learning how to balance comes from a couple things: developing a solid internal clock, choosing what style of speech to give and developing consistency in format.
 - a. A solid internal clock comes more from time and practice than anything else, but there are some things that help. Have students turn their back to you and then start a timer, have them raise their hand at what they think is 30 seconds, 1 minute, 2 minutes, etc., and write down the actual time for each raised hand. Then compare what they thought 30 seconds was to what it actually was, and do this activity until they are very close. You can modify and add to this activity by having them chat with you while doing this, having them listen to a song, etc. something which would distract them from being able to count the time. But the more speeches given, the better their clock will get.
 - b. Speech style is something that will be unique to each competitor, but the most common formats are 2x2 or 3x1. Helping students learn their particular style will be important to getting them to understand what balance looks like for their style.
 - i. 2x2 speeches are designed from two main points that support the thesis with two examples under each. This format lends itself well to a more general idea and the specific example to support each point.
 - ii. 3x1 speeches are three main points supported by a single example to design the thesis. This format is well lent to several specific examples that each highlight a different area of proof within in the thesis.
7. Focus on organization before polish. Both are very important, but a well organized speech with a few stumbles is much better than a clear speech that has very little structure. Making the

organization clear is also very important, signposting (or indicating where the speech is going) is very important in impromptu.

8. Help competitors move away from their notes. Using notes in impromptu is absolutely allowed, but as competitors get more comfortable, have them start putting their notes down in front of them, or turning them over on the desk in front of them. Getting the notes out of their hands will give them more freedom when speaking and will aid in the overall look of polish and experience with the event.

3) A set of suggestions on how to judge the event (IE: What do judges look for? Perhaps you could include some examples or quotes from actual ballots):

Judging impromptu requires an attention to timing, but in many other ways it is like judging a public address event.

1. Provide clear and correct time signals. The single most important thing for impromptu judges is to clearly articulate what time signals will be given and then following through on those signals.
 - a. Verbal time signals should be at 30 second intervals, counting up until the student stands to speak.
 - b. Once speaking time signals should be counted down in one minute intervals, showing the time left. For instance, with 3 minutes remaining, 3 fingers should be shown to the student, and so on. Once inside of one minute remaining, competitors should be given (at the very least) an indication of 30 seconds and the last 5 seconds, an additional signal of 15 seconds remaining is also very beneficial to the competitor.
2. Look at the combination of polish and organization. Impromptu should be a combination of a well organized argument and a clearly articulated speech. These two things should be balanced from the competitors end, but in the instance they aren't the overall impact of the speech should be judged. If a lack of organization makes a well spoken speech difficult to understand or if a lack of polish hinders a well organized speech, the rank and rating should reflect these issues.
3. Look for solid argumentation. Speeches should utilize examples to support a thesis which is derived from the topic given to the competitor.
4. Understand differences in speaking style. Impromptu attracts all sorts of competitors, and the speeches tend to vary as a result of that.
5. Beware of comparing apples to oranges. Due to the nature of impromptu, you may get 6 speeches which agree with the same quotation, or you may get a whole range of perspectives on both quotations. As a judge it can be difficult to compare speeches which are seemingly completely different, but if the argumentation, organization and polish are the foundations for decision making, the speeches should be easy to compare.

4) A set of suggestions on how to approach the event from a competitor's point of view.

As a competitor, the most important thing to remember about impromptu is to continually add new and different examples to your list of possibilities. If you can continually expand your example base, you will

never run out of new or fresh speeches, which will keep some of the spontaneity and fun in the event, a trait that shouldn't ever be lost.

1. Take impromptu notes in class. Utilize the things you know best, and some of that may be from your classes. If you hear, learn, discuss something in class that could be used as an example, jot it down and come back to it later to develop into an example.
2. Categorize your examples by theme. Know where they go, it will help you pull from a specific set depending on the topic you're speaking on versus pulling from your entire base, which could cost you a few very important seconds during prep.
3. Practice prepping speeches during commercials. Most TV commercials run between 1 and 3 minutes, so see how many speeches you can just prep during a set of TV commercials. Learning a method for your style of prepping will aid you significantly in round. The event is so unpredictable, so if you can make routines out of the parts of the event you control, you will be able to keep your nerves calm and thoughts focused.
4. Use the same outline for every speech. Knowing what your outline looks like allows the mechanics and organization of your speech to become secondary to the line of argumentation you are developing. One example of what a note-card could look like is here (this is designed for a 2x2 speech). You can modify this card to fit your speech style or whatever makes the most sense for you logically and visually. The other important thing to remember about your card is that it should be easy to read because you only have a glance at your card to know where you're going next. Using your note-card during your speech is perfectly acceptable, but as you get more comfortable with the event, challenge yourself to put your card down, and get away from using it during your speech.
5. Practice, practice, practice. Impromptu gets better as you practice it, you cannot simply hope that it will get better during rounds, you have to do tons of practice speeches. Doing these speeches helps you learn both how to prep, how to give the speech, but it also helps you get comfortable with the timing. Developing an internal clock is imperative for impromptu, because despite the best efforts, sometimes you aren't given time signals or you get the wrong time signals. Knowing yourself where you are on time can help you manage these mishaps and still give a solid speech that doesn't fall apart at the seams.

Intro: [really should be thought of as another example]

Agree or Disagree

Thesis: [your main argument]

- I. Main Point 1
 - a. Example 1
 - b. Example 2
- II. Main point 2
 - a. Example 3
 - b. Example 4