

IMPROMPTU SPEAKING

Most of the talking we do on a daily basis is impromptu speaking, and so if we can learn how to assemble knowledge and thought on any topic at a moments notice, we will benefit by:

- Being able to think on our feet in meetings, conversations, interview situations and other settings.
- Having greater confidence when giving prepared talks because we know that if we lose our place, we can talk intelligently on an impromptu basis for a short while till we get back on track.
- Being more skilled in social settings.

You will hear a lot about table topics and impromptu speaking in Toastmasters, and you will all get a chance to participate each week. I encourage you all to see it as another challenge that is going to hone your impromptu speaking skills and not be scared to step outside your comfort zone.

It's funny how mind can play games with us at times because we cope with our daily impromptu conversations but in a group situation like this, give the impromptu session of our meetings a fancy name like Table Topics and suddenly we can go blank.

My first tip here is to relax, don't let your mind play games by making you panic. Think about what you can say about the topic on the way to the podium.

10 Tips for Impromptu Speaking

1. **Relax.** Don't let your mind play games by making you panic. Think about what you can say about the topic on the way to the podium.
2. **Take Time** to get your ideas together. You don't need to start straight away. This will give you a few seconds to think about something to say **OR** Repeat the topic out loud. This also gives your mind a few extra seconds to think of something to say.
3. **Personalise** your response. Even if you need to make up your speech you could say something like "this reminds me of what happened to my brother" or "I remember when...".
4. **If you know nothing about the topic** make something up, or lie, but personalise the story. Some of the best table topic stories I have heard have been made up but because the story teller has used their imagination, the story has been totally believable.
5. **Elaborate.** Sometimes the subject isn't the problem, it's the time. One way of adding more interest and to extend time, is to give more elaborate descriptions. Instead of saying "the bird was singing at dawn, try "the blue and yellow birds took delight in singing at the first sign of dawn.
6. **When describing an event,** try to give the basic facts. Use who, what, when, where, why and how. E.g. given the question "describe your most memorable sporting event" you could respond with what (soccer world cup), when, (last summer), where (party at friends house) why (first soccer party) and how (rented big screen TV). By the time you fully describe all of that, you will have given a concise 1-2 minute response.
7. **Narrow the focus.** Sometimes a topic is too big to tackle as a whole e.g. "describe your most memorable birthday". To begin, acknowledge the original question and then use a bridge device to get

to your narrower version. E.g. “there are a lot of things that make a birthday memorable. My most memorable gift was....”

- 8. An off the cuff topic** is a mini speech with an opening, body and close. You could begin your opening sentence for example with “there are three reasons why I like to go camping”. Think of three reasons (body), end by summarizing what you said and then hand back to the topics master.
- 9. Stay within time.** Watch the timing signals. Once the orange light comes on, you should be starting to wind up with your closing statement or summary so that you finish with the red light.
- 10 Go for it as often as possible.** The more you do it, the easier it gets, and the better you present. More importantly **HAVE FUN.**