Impromptu speaking is giving an unprepared talk. A person simply takes the floor, selects a subject, and begins. A fundamental principle is that the ideas voiced are unrehearsed and unprepared. The distinctive feature is the unprepared delivery and the suddenness with which a person is confronted with a speech situation. Impromptu speaking is often required at those times when a person is called upon without warning “to say a few words” at a luncheon, special meeting, social gathering, or other occasion.

Many people assume that impromptu speaking is easy. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In reality impromptu speaking is extremely difficult. It is used effectively only by experienced speakers. There are methods, however, which if used properly, will enable a person to perform acceptably on the spur of the moment. This assignment will assist you in learning these methods.

How to Choose a Topic for Impromptu Speaking

There is one general rule to follow in selecting your topic: that is, if you have a choice. This rule is: choose one on which you are best fitted to speak. Consider your audience and the occasion when you are making a choice of topic.

How to Prepare for an Impromptu Speech

Naturally you cannot prepare for an unknown topic, but you can prepare a method of attack on surprise offerings from your audience. One system of doing this is to have in mind various orders by which to develop your ideas.

One order might be the time sequence in which events occur by the hour, day, month, or year, moving forward or backward from a certain time. This example will illustrate the principle involved: Topic—Houses: (1) Give the history of houses from a definite date: (2) Tell which part of the country houses were first built in and their subsequent westward movement with time: (3) Describe how with time the styles of houses change< 1620-1700-1775-1800, and the like.

A space order would take you from east to west, top to bottom, front to rear…: for example: take the topic, Houses. Then develop the speech in space order, giving the items in this way: (1) Specify the location of houses and their types, starting in California and traveling east: (2) Locate various classes of houses found in a city, starting at a slum area and moving to the wealthy outlying districts: (3) Describe houses according to locations in various parts of the world.

Using casual order, you might discuss certain forces and then point out the results which follow. Use this example: (1) Eskimos live in igloos. Why? Give reasons (causes). Or you might mention that South Pacific tribes dwell in grass and mud huts. Why? Give reasons (causes). (2) Prefabricated houses are now being built. Why? Give the causes that led to their development. (3) There are many hundreds of styles of houses of different architecture. Why? Give causes for this great diversification.

A special order, one of your own devising. For example take the same topic – Houses. (1) Tell how to build a house or different kinds of houses. (2) Give the legal aspects of house construction—such as, wiring, sewage disposal plants, plumbing, type of dwelling in restricted areas, distance from street, … (3) How to contract for house construction…

Another method that is effective is listed below. It should be kept in mind that any method a speaker elects to use is not self-propelled. The person who applies the method will need to keep their wits about them and utilize only those portions of the device which are adapted to their particular speech, the occasion, the audience, and their own background and knowledge. You will probably find it necessary to literally memorize the points which follow. If you do this and then develop your topic in the order of the various headings, you will make a logical speech.
1. Why is this topic important to your audience? To you?
2. Give a history of important events which will show the background and development of your subject.
3. What are the overall effects of your topic (such as, ______) on your audience, the state, the nation, the world?
   A. What are the effects geographically?
   B. What are the effects politically?
   C. What are the effects economically?
   D. What are the effects socially?
   E. What are the effects religiously?
   F. What are the effects educationally?
   G. What are the effects morally?
   H. What are the effects agriculturally?
   I. What are the effects …..
4. What caused these effects? (Give as many causes as you can which will explain the effects you have enumerated. You may do this by discussing an effect and then by giving the cause of it immediately after.)
5. What are the different solutions to the problems? (You have told what is happening (effects) and what to do about the problem or problems. Thus, you will have offered several different solutions.)
6. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each solution you propose.
7. Select one or two solutions which you think are best. Tell why they are best.
8. How do you propose to take action on these solutions? How may you and your audience go about putting your solutions into practice? Mention one or more ways to do this.
9. Conclude your speech.
   A. You may summarize.
   B. You may appeal to your audience.
   C. You may ask your audience to do a specific act. Example:
      1. Write to your congressman, (2) vote against _________.
5. How to Present an Impromptu Speech
   In presenting an impromptu speech your attitude is a deciding factor in determining your effectiveness. First of all, you must maintain poise. It does not matter how surprised you are, how difficult your topic is. It does not make any difference what happens when you receive your subject or while you are speaking or after you have concluded your speech: you still must maintain poise. It is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of poise. Now you ask, how do you maintain poise? Here are a number of suggestions and answers. (1) Do not fidget around at your seat before you speak, just because you know you will soon be “on the spot.” (2) When you are called on to speak, rise calmly and take your place before your audience. (3) If you know your topic when you take the platform, begin your remarks calmly, without hurrying (have some vigor and force), and be sure that you have a plan in mind by which you will develop your thoughts. Do not apologize to your audience in any way, by word or action. (4) If you do not know your topic when you rise to speak but are offered several choices after obtaining the floor, simply stand calmly before the group and listen carefully to the suggestions which are made. You should ask that a topic be repeated if you do not understand it. After you have received all of the proposed subjects, either stand calmly or walk calmly back and forth a few seconds while you decide which offering you will talk about. Ten seconds should be the maximum time to decide. Once your selection is made, decide immediately what method or plan you will use developing it. This plan should have been committed to memory before you ever placed yourself in a position where you might be asked to give an impromptu speech. After you have chosen your method of development, you will make your introductory remarks by telling why the subject is important to your listeners. When you begin to speak, do not make any apology of any sort whatsoever. Get on with your speech.
In actually delivering an impromptu speech, it is wise not to start too fast but rather to pick up speed and power as you go along. Aside from this, you should observe bodily actions and gestures which are in keeping with the speech situation. Your voice should be filled with meaning and easily heard by all. Naturally, your articulation, pronunciation, and grammar will be of high standard.

There is little to fear from impromptu speaking if you follow a preconceived method of attack on your subject. The way to do this is to refuse to allow yourself to become panicky, to recognize that some nervousness is a good sign of readiness, and to realize that your audience will expect nothing extraordinary from you because they, too, will know you are speaking impromptu. Actually, they will be “pulling for you.” So you see, if you go about your task with poise and determination, your chances of success are exceedingly good. I might add here that a well-rounded knowledge attained from a strong study of current events will assist you immeasurably.

Packet # 7 Speech

QUESTIONS OVER IMPROMPTU SPEAKING

Answer on your Own Paper please.

1. Define “Impromptu”.
2. What are the two distinctive features of an impromptu speech?
3. **IF** you have a choice in selecting your topic what is the one general rule you should follow?
4. How **can** you prepare for an impromptu speech since you do not know your topic?
5. List and describe the 9 points that will lead to a logical impromptu speech.
6. Describe a time sequence method.
7. Describe a space order method.
8. Describe a casual order method.
9. Describe a special order method.
10. What points would you want to memorize for an impromptu speech and describe them.
11. What are at least 6 effects one would want to be sure and discuss when covering an impromptu topic?
12. Describe in logical steps how to present an impromptu speech.