

Delivery Strategies

More on Examples

Good examples often have plot twists or very clear moral lessons. At the very least, an example narrative needs a short exposition (who/what/when/where), a conflict or choice that makes the story interesting, an explanation of what happened as a result, and a link to the theme/moral of the example. Telling good stories in impromptu also requires knowing when to start a story and when to stop it. It'd be really weird to tell a story about the election of Barack Obama and stop before 2008 or start it after 2016. Know where the important content is and adjust. You can also get multiple morals out of one story depending on where you start/stop! Practice framing your examples in different ways.

Do not overuse your examples. Impromptu speakers, coaches, and judges alike take this very seriously, and there is a rule against the practice, which is also called "canning." Canning is usually defined as using the same example more than once at a tournament in the same way. It is unethical because using an example too many times in the same context gives you more practice with the example in front of audiences and takes away the spontaneous element of the event. To avoid canning, make sure you have plenty of examples! Write them down in a notebook if you need to and keep track of the ones you've used at certain tournaments.

Managing Stress/Anxiety

It's super normal to get nervous, stressed, or even anxious during an impromptu speech. Any impromptu speaker would be lying to you if they said they were never nervous. Some things to keep in mind for managing that stress:

- Everyone feels the same way as you! We're all nervous, so if solidarity comforts you, know it's there.
- No one wants to see a bad speech. Why would we? Watching someone who is visibly scared speak isn't fun; we don't want you to be uncomfortable. Because of that, everyone is rooting for you.
- Remember to breathe! Nervous speakers tend to speed up, which makes them stumble, which makes them more nervous. A terrible cycle. Remind yourself after each point or natural pause in the speech to slow down and breathe. It might not make you 100% calm, but at least you'll look and sound less afraid!

Humor

Long story short: it's not for everyone. If you want to make jokes in impromptu, you should be very sure that you'll get a laugh out of it. Nothing stings worse than when a joke you think is hilarious gets a completely silent reaction from the room. Do a risk-reward analysis, and don't take risks you don't think will pay off. DO NOT make fun of people who are being oppressed! That's called punching down and it is not a good joke strategy. If you want to make a joke about power imbalances, make fun of the oppressor instead; it's funny to laugh at jerks. Finally, you don't always have to be funny. Humor isn't required in impromptu and it doesn't always guarantee you better ranks. If something needs to be serious, let it be serious. Remain

consistent in emotional tone throughout a speech and switch it up when you get the next prompt if you want.

Practice Activities

For finding examples: go through your class notes and identify stories/people/theories who would make for good examples in a speech! Practice telling those items of information as narratives; if they sound good and have solid themes, add them to your example book. If not, no worries! You've studied for class either way.

For interpretation practice: burn through as many quotations as possible in a short amount of time, identifying an interpretation and thesis for each. Hardcore challenge: see how many quotations you can get through in five minutes!

For point generation: prep a quotation three ways. Did you interpret it as descriptive the first two times? See how it'd work as a prescriptive 3x1 speech the third time! Keep all of your points distinct and find different examples for each.

For delivery: set a timer and speak for as long as you can without stumbling or repeating yourself. This one is super fun as a challenge with teammates (protip: talk slowly and you'll speak forever!).