

Competition Events – At A Glance

An Introduction to Impromptu (IMP)



Event Description

Impromptu is a public speaking event where students have seven minutes to select a topic, brainstorm their ideas, outline, and deliver a speech. The speech is given without notes and uses an introduction, body, and conclusion. The speech can be lighthearted or serious. It can be based upon prompts that range from nursery rhymes, current events, celebrities, organizations, and more.

Considerations for Impromptu

Impromptu tests a student's ability to analyze a prompt, process their thoughts, organize the points of the speech, and deliver them in a clear, coherent manner. Students' logic is extremely important. They must be able to take an abstract idea, such as a fortune from a fortune cookie, and put together a speech that has a thesis and supporting information.

Traits of Successful Impromptu Performers

When considering what event you should choose, or which direction to point a student when selecting an event, here are some traits of successful Impromptu students to keep in mind:

- Dynamic verbal delivery skills
- Engages an audience
- Quick thinker
- Creative
- Logical thinker
- Broad knowledge base

Samples of Past Impromptu Prompts

Impromptu topics will have a theme each round. Some examples of these themes include:

- Political quotations
- Music lyrics
- Historical women
- Mythical creatures
- Beach day objects
- Movie quotations

Learn More! The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For Impromptu, we have videos of past national final round performances at the middle and high school levels. We have a full-length textbook on Extemporaneous Speaking in addition to many other general resources, activities for class or practice, and more. Visit www.speechanddebate.org for more information.

Find Your Voice

Impromptu speaking is like jumping into public speaking head first. It forced quick confidence and helped me grow as a speaker by giving me the skills to prioritize my decision making to prepare an organized and meaningful speech."

— Alex Baranosky, Association Alum

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Basic Understandings

Impromptu is a limited preparation public speaking event that involves topics ranging from proverbs to abstract words to events to famous people. Each round, students will draw three topics from an envelope containing prompts that relate to a specific topic, and they will choose one prompt. Students will have a total of seven minutes to prepare, memorize, and perform their speech.

As there are so many different topic areas for Impromptu prompts that may be used, it is important to observe rounds to see what prompts have been used in the past. The Association has final round videos of Impromptu from both the high school and middle school level to review.

Preparation

Though Impromptu prompts rarely require vast amounts of research to understand, students may consult published books, magazines, newspapers, and journal articles that they bring with them to preparation. These materials must be originals or photocopies with no annotation, underlining, writing, or highlighting. Students may not bring outlines or pre-written speeches into the preparation room.

Students would benefit from keeping up with news and current events to maintain a level of background knowledge that may be useful on a variety of topics. Depending on the tournament, the topic areas for each round may be released prior to the competition. If so, students should work with their teammates to read and gather materials on those topics. Researching examples or brainstorming anecdotes that may be relevant for those topic areas can be a good way to prepare for potential Impromptu speeches.

Organizing

In an Impromptu round, the speaker draws three prompts from an envelope. After drawing the three prompts, the student must select one and begin brainstorming their ideas for the speech. In total, a student has seven minutes. This seven minutes may be divided up by the student however they see fit. For example, they could brainstorm and outline their ideas for three minutes and then

deliver a four-minute speech. Alternatively, they could brainstorm and outline for one minute and speak for six minutes. There is no minimum amount of time required for brainstorming and no minimum amount of time for speaking.



Students should work to develop the best possible structure and reasoning in as short amount of time as possible. While it may appear more impressive to speak longer, if the ideas aren't clear or well developed, it can detract from the overall performance. Conversely, a well-thought out but short speech restricts a student's ability to spend adequate time analyzing the prompt. Therefore, students should work to strike a balance between preparation and speaking.

Structural Components

An Impromptu speech typically follows a basic structure in which a student presents an introduction, body, and conclusion.

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The introduction should provide adequate context for the trajectory of the speech. If a student has illustrated an example, conveyed their chosen prompt, and provided a thesis statement for the speech, they have created a structurally sound introduction!

The body of the speech commonly explores two or three areas of the prompt in greater depth. For example, if a student's thesis focuses on cultivating innovation, they would likely introduce two effective ways to do so and use examples to prove their point.

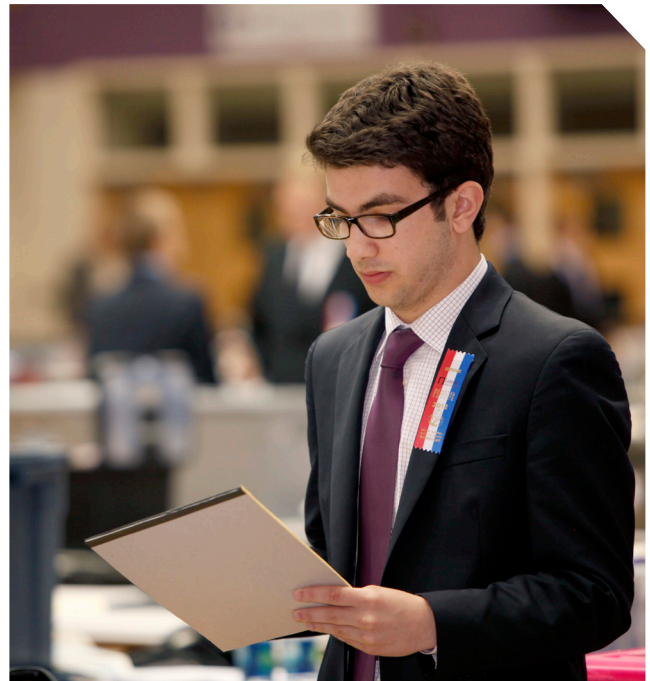
The conclusion wraps up the speech. It will tie back to the attention grabbing device from the introduction, reiterate the prompt, and review the main points of the speech.

Performance Tips

Impromptu speeches are unique in that they require effective organization in a short period of time. Make sure speeches have a clear structure, are using transitions between each part of the speech, and follow a logical trajectory. Additionally, judges will evaluate the quality of an Impromptu speech's analysis. Does the student directly address the prompt? Does the student develop justifications for their ideas and establish significance to those points? Finally, though Impromptu is a test of a student's ability to think on their feet and present a logical, organized speech, delivery skills are still important! Students should continue to focus on their voice, movement, and expression.

At a tournament, keep a notebook for between rounds. Sometimes, another person's performance will inspire you, and it's a good idea to have a notebook handy to write down new ideas for organization or anecdotes. It's also nice to know who you competed against in each round. This way, you have a better understanding of who your competition is. When you review your ballots after the tournament, you can go back through your notebook and compare your ballots to your notes. Between rounds, figure out what room you will be performing in next. Congratulate your competitors on a good performance after the round ends, and make friends during downtime. Be gracious, and keep criticisms of other performers to

yourself, even if someone else tries to start a negative conversation.



Resources

Check out Impromptu resources at www.speechanddebate.org. Final round performances from the middle school and high school National Tournament can help get a feel for the different types of Impromptu prompts as well as provide examples of successful speech organization. The Extemporaneous Speaking textbook also shares ideas for practicing speech outlining and idea generation during preparation. Finally, sample Impromptu prompts from previous National Tournaments are available online to use for practice.