**Impromptu Overview and Strategies**

**Procedure of Impromptu Speaking**

1. Draw three topics
2. Review all three and decide which is your favorite
3. 2 minutes prep time
4. 5 minute speech

**Topics in Order of Frequency at Tournaments**

1. General Quotations (To an ant, a raindrop is a flood.)
2. Proverbs (A penny saved is a penny earned.)
3. One ‘Worder’ (Respect, Elderly, Reputation, etc)
4. Proper Names (Madonna, Justin Timberlake or Robin Thicke?, etc.)
5. Pop Culture (*Gone in Sixty Seconds*, *The Walking Dead*, *Star Wars*)

**How to Approach General Quotations**

"If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.”

The literal meaning is that if the heat in the kitchen is too great for you to tolerate, you should leave the kitchen. But if that is all the impromptu speaker talks about, the rating would not be very good. In reality, the good impromptu speaker will try to **determine the abstract meaning of the saying and use that meaning as the topic of the speech.** On an abstract level, this topic really deals with how we handle stress and pressure. It suggests that you should not put yourself in positions of pressure if you aren't the type of person who can handle it. From this, a speaker might include discussion about the pressure to get good grades, the pressure on public figures, or the stress of leadership, as well as providing solutions for handling stress. Each of these areas would allow the speaker to use specific illustrations and examples, as well as other types of support materials. These would make the speech far more interesting than one which analyzed the topic only on a literal level.

**How to Approach One-Word Topics**

One word abstracts are a second type of topic commonly used in impromptu speaking. These are topics like love, honesty, courage, integrity and success. These topics allow the speaker a great deal of range in the specific content of the speech. For some speakers, this is an advantage because it allows them to apply specific knowledge and content to build an interesting speech. For other speakers, this range becomes a disadvantage because it doesn't provide direction for the speech, so the speech tends to wander and ramble, without making a specific point. For example, with the topic "love," one speaker might ramble and talk about everything related to love which comes to mind. But a more focused speaker might choose to talk only about the difference between love and infatuation. This would be a much better speech.

One word topics can include any single word. Some examples include rock, tree, song, and blue.

Again, some speakers will talk about everything which the topic calls to mind, while **an experienced speaker will tend to isolate a single thesis statement from the topic and concentrate only on it.** With the topic "blue," I have heard a speech in which the speaker simply began listing all the blue things that came to mind. How boring and pointless! A stronger speaker with the same topic might choose to talk about the thesis: Pollution is robbing us of the ability to enjoy our blue skies. Or the speaker might interpret blue to mean "having the blues" and talk about depression. Again, these would be better speeches, because they are focused and each has a specific thesis.

**Outline of an Impromptu Speech**

1. Introduction
   1. Attention getter that is relevant to the topic
   2. Statement of topic drawn
   3. Statement of position you are taking
   4. Preview of subtopics.
2. Body
   1. Subtopic 1 (example, anecdote, etc.) – Current Events/Political
3. Subtopic 2 (example, anecdote, etc.) – Historical
   1. Subtopic 3 (example, anecdote, etc.) – Literary
4. Conclusion
   1. Reminder of position and topic (how they relate)
   2. Review of subtopics
   3. Closing (similar to attention getter)

**Helpful Hints**

1. Slow down your speech so that your mind has time to think as you talk
2. Memorize the order of your subtopics
3. Make sure you ask for time signals in order to hit time (4:30 – 5:00)
4. Read extensively in order to have a broad range of knowledge that you can easily include in your speech (stories, statistics, interesting tidbits, etc.)
5. Study current events and pop culture trends a week ahead of the tournament.
6. Practice Associative Thinking

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pICGD3bhfKA>