

## Tips for Speaking without notice

Developing the skill of speaking with little notice often helps win the argument and may assist career or Association opportunities. A few people we observe can make that small speech “off the cuff” with little or no apparent preparation time – maybe at work, at a party or in our community.

The fear of making a short notice speech can be reduced if there is a plan or structure. As soon as you are asked to speak; brainstorm ideas and often the first one is the best. With this advice, you may improve, next you need to stand and provide your opinion with little or no time to prepare.

Success is with those who are persuasive when they have little thinking time! Be assured that you will improve the more times you practise (and most of these ideas also work in prepared exercises). Those students who win speaking competitions do so with an excellent impromptu speech. Here are some tips.

1. If you have an idea, immediately jump into the one that offers you scope and where your experiences can come into play. See if it provides an opportunity to draw on previous research, speeches, hobbies, a passion (belief) or anecdotes.
2. Try to include humour – self-deprecating is usually easiest and most effective or a humorous story and then link it with lessons learned, but don’t automatically assume they are on your wavelength.
3. If you have a short time to prepare, develop a simple plan and work out the last thing you want to say. Then, brainstorm ideas; use a mind map and put all thoughts on paper. While you blueprint your approach, don’t reject anything too early.
4. Start with one tangible point (an arresting opening) and then extend your ideas to include two or more related points. As you improve, new ideas will come as you are speaking.
5. A statement or a rhetorical question can be a good start. You may then wish to provide the answer, while tying in the last few words that becomes the core of your strong conclusion.
6. Build the middle to develop your message and employ interesting and descriptive words. It is accepted that with little or no time to prepare, you are not able to draw on your normal resources.
7. There is the time frame concept – what happened in the past and then now and finally what it will be in the future. Discuss an argument from both sides e.g. Speed Cameras – do they control the behavior of dangerous drivers or are they simply revenue raisers?
8. What the world would be like without it. If the topic was ‘The Anzacs’, imagine what we would be like without that important history.
9. Offer specific convictions and don’t be afraid to speak against a generally held belief, but back up your opinions with facts and persuasive arguments. It’s liberating to challenge popular opinions.
10. Practise techniques in front of the mirror, when alone. Look at your dog and make a speech about ‘Our best friend’. Or if in a traffic snarl, imagine your speech is on solving that problem.
11. Challenge yourself to look at something and working out a speech that is exhilarating, challenging and thought provoking. Funny anecdotes, apart from being amusing or interesting, may work well, but ‘don’t lay an egg’. Sometimes however, outrageous stories do succeed.



12. Perhaps talk about somebody you know/knew or an incident in your life. Once, I spoke about my relationship with 'The Don', who was a friend of my grandfather. Study others to see how they speak at short notice. Some leaders do it well, but others make a mess of it – learn from all.
13. Have a message; state your reason for believing in it and if possible, provide an example to illustrate and then find a conclusion. Imagine your audience being pleased as they listen. Make use of your time.
14. You may have a winner when you combine excitement, pathos and a strong, personal message. Will your audience be inspired or entertained by what you are about to say.
15. Be creative, fresh and find something that is not contrived. All that said, don't be too tough on yourself. Impromptu speeches are the most difficult and your audience will be with you all the way.
16. Attempt to conclude within 30 seconds of the allocated time (plus or minus) otherwise they may just remember the time. To not run out of things to say too early, have more points to discuss than you think you will need and discard them before your summary if time is running out,
17. Offer information they may not know. Recently in an impromptu, I heard someone speak about a little-known SA pioneer. He knew the history being a tour guide in the West Terrace Cemetery.
18. Move beyond personal attitudes and be balanced – awareness of current events/issues/personalities may help. Keep up with news and interpret it, while remembering your audience.
19. You may have time to prepare palm cards with key points to be recalled at a glance, but speeches with no notes are usually more effective, because of the eye contact.
20. You may be nervous during the speech, but if you freeze, then pause, take a big breath to gather your thoughts and simply press on. Try to make it look like an intended pause – the gaps can be very powerful.
21. Avoid repetition, unless it is intentional (reinforcement – the power of three works well). Three excellent tools are pauses, repetition and alliteration.
22. Short notice exercises are probably most liberating exercises you will ever undertake. Therefore, attempt to learn from your successes, but also from when you think you did not quite nail it.
23. Some of my friends prefer the short notice speech, since it keeps the mind alert, helps the adrenalin rush and may have the potential to defer/postpone dementia.
24. People who fear and hate speaking with little notice may not become as successful as those who have 'the gift of the gab'. Embrace the challenges and be better for it; nothing like being spontaneously eloquent.
25. To come back to an early point; these exercises will help prepare you for 'that' question from the boss or educator 'out of the blue'. It may help you win a job when the question you don't expect is pitched.

