

Giving an Impromptu Speech

Oh, no! You've been scheduled to speak and have had **NO** time to prepare. Do you cancel? No, you don't have to... Not if you follow these tips for giving an impromptu speech:

- **Idea #1:** Select a topic that is familiar to you. Write down 3-5 key points which you'll deliver during your presentation and briefly think about how you will open and close the speech.
- **Idea #2:** Tell a story. One of our public speaking club members recently gave a speech in which she spoke about working as an intern in Washington D.C. during election time. This speech was entertaining and well-received. We all have such stories which we can easily recount from memory without having to spend much time preparing a formal speech.
- **Idea #3:** Ask the audience to suggest five possible speech topics for you at the beginning of the meeting. Then select one of these topics and jot down a few notes before you are called upon to deliver your speech. I have done this a few times and have found it to be a surprisingly easy method for delivering a great speech. Once, I gave a speech on the benefits of Toastmasters membership at a Toastmasters club meeting at which a number of guests were present. Since I had been a Toastmasters member for a long time, the benefits were fresh in my mind and thus quite simple for me to recall and discuss.
- **Idea #4:** This one isn't for the faint of heart... Recently, one of our club members asked the Toastmaster to select his speech topic right before his speech. Then he immediately proceeded to get up and speak about that topic! Scary, yes... but not as difficult as you would think.

The most important thing to remember is that Toastmasters is a supportive environment. We don't have to be perfect, and giving an impromptu speech is a great way to challenge yourself while honoring your commitment to speak. Impromptu speaking is a new skill and different from giving a prepared speech, but we are in Toastmasters to learn and grow. I have enjoyed giving impromptu speeches and I hope you will, too.