

## Lesson Note – Impromptu Presentations

### Introduction

An **impromptu presentation** is when you have to give a presentation with very little or no preparation. Examples include

- Introducing yourself at a party or event
- Job interview
- Q&A
- Giving a toast (saying something nice about someone) at a wedding or a coworkers' farewell party
- Meetings

Being able to think quickly and talk in an intelligent manner is an extremely important skill in today's society, so your sixth assignment will be an impromptu presentation.

### Common Mistakes in Impromptu Speeches

#### Mistake 1: Talking right away.

Often, when we are asked to talk about something, we get nervous and don't want to have any silence, so we start talking right away. As a result, we stumble and stutter and sound very bad.

**Solution: Buy some time to write down your key ideas.**

You can usually stall for 30 seconds before you really have to start talking. Use that time to write down some key points and your presentation structure.

#### Mistake 2: Rambling

Again, when we are nervous, we tend to avoid silence. So what happens? We just keep talking and talking and talking. That's called rambling.

**Solution: Write down some key points, including your introduction and conclusion.**

Speak less. Speak at your own pace. Use pauses. Have a structure.

#### Mistake 3: Too factual and boring

When we don't know what to say, we tend to say whatever we know, which is usually boring facts that everyone knows. For example, if the topic is "How to be happy", a nervous person might start saying boring facts like you should make good friends and find a hobby. Everyone already knows that. It's boring.

**Solution: Instead of talking about boring facts, share your own personal story.**

To continue the example of "How to be happy", it's much more interesting if you share your own stories about your happiest moment in life and what you learned about happiness from that moment.

## Structures for Impromptu Speeches

We'll talk about three simple structures: PET, FAT, and CART

### PET

The first structure is **PET: Point, Example, Tie-back**. You should use this if your topic is formal and factual, like in a meeting or Q&A session.

- **Point:** Say your main point or message
- **Example:** Give examples to illustrate your point
- **Tie Back:** Connect your example back to your main point

Let's say you are in a meeting, and your boss tells you to update the team on the project schedule. We can use the PET structure.

**Point:** *"The project schedule is mostly going well, but there are a couple things behind schedule."*

**Examples:** *"Items 1 and 2 are good. They will arrive on time. But item 3 is going to arrive late, so we have to wait. We already contacted the seller about it."*

**Tie-back:** *"So overall, most things are on schedule."*

### FAT

The second structure is **FAT: Feeling, Anecdote, Tie-Back**. You should use this if your topic is more informal or emotional, like when your giving a toast or talking about a casual topic.

Let's say you are asked to give a toast to a friend, Michael, at his birthday party. That means you need to say something nice about him to honor him. Let's use the FAT structure.

**Feeling:** *"I want to give a toast to Michael for his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. I feel so grateful to have such a wonderful and caring friend like him."*

**Anecdote:** *"I remember last month, when I was sick and missed a week of classes, Michael took notes for me and spend hours tutoring me on the classes I missed."*

*(...blah blah blah...make the story a bit longer and more emotional...)*

*Thanks to his caring attitude and help, I was able to catch up in school very soon and still do well in my classes."*

**Tie Back:** *"I can't think of a more caring person than Michael, and that's why I'm so happy and honored to give him this toast for his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday."*

## STAR

The third structure is **STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result**. This structure is useful in job interviews or whenever someone asks you to share a past experience.

Let's say in a job interview, the interviewer asks you, "Tell me about your greatest achievement." We'll use STAR to answer it.

**Situation:** You need to explain the situation of your story. So you can say,  
*"In my senior year at high school, I participated in the Global Youth Challenge, which is a worldwide competition for high school students to share their ideas and research on important global issues."*

**Task:** *"My task was to share my ideas on climate change."*

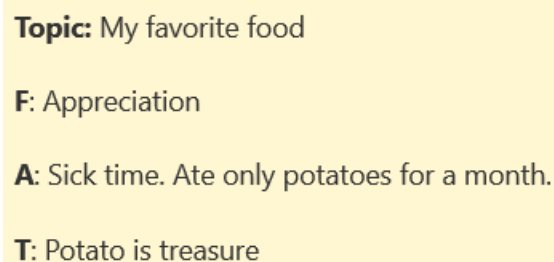
**Action:** *"I did a lot of research on how people can reduce their carbon footprint by eating less meat, buying organic foods, and using renewable energy. I wrote an essay and also made a short video on my findings."*

**Result:** *"As a result of my hard work, I earned top 25% among over 500 submissions. My experience with the Global Youth Challenge was definitely a great learning experience. I learned a lot about how to communicate my ideas and make videos."*

## Tips for Impromptu Speeches

### Tip 1: Use a Structure

When you find out your topic, take 30 seconds to jot down your structure on a sticky note. If you can, write down a point for each structure. For example, let's say I just found out my topic is "Talk about your favorite food." I can take 30 seconds to jot down quick notes like this:



**Topic:** My favorite food

**F:** Appreciation

**A:** Sick time. Ate only potatoes for a month.

**T:** Potato is treasure

Then, when I'm speaking, I can refer to my notes to stay on track and prevent myself from rambling.

### Tip 2: Think of the Audience as Part of the Presentation

We get nervous when we think of the audience as the receivers of our presentation, as if we are supposed to impress them. It's better for everyone when you include the audience in your speech. Get

their opinions. Comment on their reactions. The audience probably knows you're talking impromptu, so they will try to help you.

#### Tip 3: Speak Less. Don't Ramble.

Speak at a slow pace to give yourself more time to think. Have pauses. Ask the audience questions. These are all ways to fill up the time while also making your speech more memorable.

#### Tip 4: Give an Anecdote (Personal Story)

The easiest things to talk about are true stories that actually happened to you in the past. So whatever your topic is, always try to talk about a personal story. You should also try to pick emotional or interesting stories because those stories are easier for you to remember, and they will be more enjoyable for the audience to listen to.

### Check Your Understanding Questions:

1. Give some examples of impromptu presentations
2. What are the three structures for impromptu speeches and when should you use them?
3. Give some tips for doing impromptu presentations