

CHAPTER 15

EXTEMPORANEOUS AND IMPROMPTU SPEAKING



Extemp is life.

—Austan Goolsbee, Professor of Economics, University of Chicago

Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to do the following.

- Define both extemporaneous speaking and impromptu speaking.
- Describe the differences between extemporaneous speaking and impromptu speaking.
- Deliver an extemporaneous speech.
- Deliver an impromptu speech.

Speech Vocabulary

In this chapter, you will learn the meanings of the speech terms listed below.

impromptu	compelling insight
extemporaneous	topic-specific
conversational	label
quality	analysis
foreshadowing	zinger
justification	

Chapter Outline

Following are the main sections in this chapter.

- 1 Extemporaneous Speaking
- 2 Impromptu Speaking

Academic Vocabulary

Expanding your academic vocabulary will help you become a more effective communicator. Listed below are some words appearing in this chapter that you should make part of your vocabulary.

faltering	qualms
fiasco	erudite
prescriptive	insinuated

Looking Ahead

The ability to speak well is becoming more and more important as the United States continues to make a transition from an industry-based economy to a service-based economy. If you want to succeed in a service-based economy, you must be able to communicate effectively. Economist Joseph J. Penbera points out, "As the need for unskilled labor diminishes in many industries, there will be greater demand for those with . . . the ability to communicate through writing and public speaking." This chapter will introduce some of the skills needed for you to be in demand.

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself chuckling as you listened to a friend mumble and stumble through an oral presentation in class? You really didn't want to hurt your friend's feelings by laughing, but in the immortal words of Homer Simpson, it was funny because it wasn't happening to you.

But wait. What happened when your turn came to speak? How did you do? The situation probably wasn't so funny after all when *you* had to get up in front of the class.

In this chapter, you will learn more about taking your turn with the two most common forms of speaking: extemporaneous and impromptu.

Mastering these two common forms of speech will help you feel more comfortable thinking and speaking on your feet. You will learn how to organize your thoughts and prepare your speeches. Furthermore, you will be better able to say what you mean.

Practicing and preparing for a speech are both excellent ways to avoid embarrassing yourself in front of an audience.



Extemporaneous Speaking

Although some people believe that extemporaneous speaking is the same as impromptu speaking, there are differences. An **impromptu** speech is generally defined as talking with little or no preparation. Speaking with minimal preparation is sometimes described as talking off-the-cuff. An **extemporaneous** speech, by contrast, is a presentation that is carefully prepared and practiced in advance. When delivering a speech extemporaneously, you rely on notes or on an outline. Your notes should contain key words or phrases to remind you of the important ideas. Using an outline has two advantages: (1) it will jog your memory and remind you of where you are in the speech, and (2) it allows you to adjust the length of your speech because you can add or drop information as you adapt to an audience's reaction.

Furthermore, you can make last-minute notes on your outline if you become aware of the needs of a particular audience. This flexibility allows you to use essentially the same speech for different audiences. Additionally, an outline can save preparation time and provide better organization than is possible in an impromptu speech. Finally, you will have more control over your thoughts and your use of language.

Developing a Natural Style

The key to effective extemporaneous speaking is to develop a conversational quality. When you speak with a **conversational quality**, you sound spontaneous to the audience. You don't want to sound over-rehearsed, as if you are reciting from rote memory. Sounding as if you are reciting rather than sounding conversational makes you seem mechanical or stiff. Worst of all, mechanical recitation becomes boring. You need, instead, to develop a conversational style of speaking. And you need to establish the strong eye contact that can only come from not being tied to your notes. In short, to look natural you must practice looking as if you haven't

been practicing. After all, the most accomplished actors never appear to be acting. They seem natural, spontaneous, real. And so should you.

Preparing for Competition

Now that you know the basics of extemporaneous speaking, you may want to take your act on the road. Many students polish their skills by participating in interscholastic competition. Your teacher can explain how you can become involved in these contests. Not only will you learn, but you will have a lot of fun as well.

"Extemp," as it is known, requires that you analyze a current topic and prepare a speech on that topic within 30 minutes. Usually you must then deliver your speech in less than seven minutes. Generally, you draw three topics from an envelope



Political campaigners must be ready to speak extemporaneously on almost any subject.

and choose one for your speech. Topics, ordinarily in question form, include such issues as these:

- How can we fight teen drug abuse?
- What is the future of the Middle East?
- Should the U.S. government provide a national health care system?

Once you have selected a topic, you refer to files of collected newspaper and magazine articles that you have brought to the tournament. During your speech, you quote from articles to help support your answer to the question. The challenge is to organize your thoughts and present them in a clear and meaningful way in only 5 to 7 minutes. Some tournaments allow you to use one note card; others do not. Judges evaluate how well you answer the question you have chosen. What follows on the next three pages is a sample extemporaneous speech by Jeremy Mallory on the

topic “Should Prozac Be Banned?” Prozac’s introduction to the U.S. market in the 1980s caused some controversy because of its possible side effects and because some people thought it could be prescribed as a way to “fix” someone’s personality. This is a transcript of the speech Mallory delivered to win first place in the final round of the Catholic Forensic League Grand National Tournament. Study this example to learn one way you can organize a contest speech. Remember, though, that the opinions expressed are those of the speaker; the speech is not intended to be an endorsement for Prozac or any other drug.

Extemporaneous Contests

Five Tips from a Former National Champion Austan Goolsbee, one of the most successful high school extempers ever (with three national championships), offers advice to aspiring competitors.

- Keep your old speeches. You can use them to practice before a tournament. Also, it’s fun to look back on speeches from the previous year to see how much you have improved.
- Advanced extempers should choose *prescriptive* topics when possible. A prescriptive topic might be “What should Congress do to reduce drinking and driving?” Such topics are the most difficult because they require the speaker to prescribe (set down as a rule or guide) specific policy suggestions. Although prescriptive topics tend to be the most challenging, speaking on one is more likely to impress a judge than speaking on another type of topic.
- Avoid canned introductions. Speakers who use the same introduction round after round not only lose the respect of fellow competitors, but they never learn to think creatively.
- Practice speeches that have a limited and specific purpose. In other words, use one practice session just to work on **foreshadowing**. Next, work on the wording of the **justification** step. Then work on gestures.
- Enjoy every speech. When you choose your topic, think to yourself, “That’s just what I wanted.” Right before you enter the room to speak, say to yourself, “It’s gonna be a party!”

INSTANT IMPACT

Persistence Pays

Too many students lose confidence after *faltering* in their first attempt at public speaking. Even practicing over and over may not be enough. The key to successful presentations of any kind is experience. This lesson was learned by a young man from Exeter, New Hampshire. Every time he was asked to address his schoolmates, his attempt was a *fiasco*.

He admitted, “I could not speak before the school. Many a piece did I commit to memory, and recite and rehearse in my own room, over and over again, and yet, when the day came, when my name was called, and all eyes turned to my seat, I could not raise myself from it. When the occasion was over, I went home and wept bitter tears.”

Later this young man determined that he would conquer his fear, even if he died in the attempt. That he succeeded admirably is indicated in the mere fact of his identity. He was Daniel Webster, often still acclaimed as the greatest orator America has ever produced.

Analysis

Speech

An introduction with a **compelling insight** tells listeners something they don't know and something they are likely to find interesting. Please note how the discussion of risk introduces the idea of evaluating the risks of Prozac later. When you directly connect your introduction to the remainder of the speech, the introduction is **topic-specific**.

The justification step explains the importance of the topic you are discussing. You need to justify for the audience why they should care. Furthermore, you should make a smooth transition from the introduction to the statement of the question to be answered.

Make certain that you state the question exactly. It is your responsibility to answer this question accurately and completely.

The answer to the question is the equivalent of the thesis in an essay. As you remember, the thesis is the central idea or message in either an essay or a speech. You answer the question immediately so that your arguments will follow directly from that answer.

This is the foreshadowing step. Foreshadowing simply means that you are providing a map to the rest of the speech. This listing of what is to come in the body of the speech is sometimes called partitioning, forecasting, signposting, or mapping.

At this point, you need to return to the first issue that you foreshadowed. Avoid saying tired phrases like "Now let's go back to the first issue." You also indicate how many subpoints will be discussed under this issue.

In an article entitled "Boo! You're Dead!" several Harvard professors tried to figure out what it would take to raise your chance of death by one-millionth: smoking 1.4 cigarettes, drinking a half liter of wine, staying in a coal mine for three hours, spending six minutes in a canoe, drinking Miami tap water for one year, or staying in New York for two days.

Some amount of risk accompanies anything we do, but that doesn't stop us from trying to avoid the big ones. We try to weigh the benefits against the risks to see if that two-day stint in New York City is really worth it. Recently, a drug called Prozac hit the market, then hit the magazine stands on the cover of *Newsweek*, a feat rarely accomplished by a pharmaceutical. People were excited because it was billed as one of the likely cures for depression. Others dismissed it as a modern snake oil. Still others found dangerous side effects.

Now we need to figure out whether Prozac is a miracle drug or medical disaster, and ask ourselves the question: "Should Prozac be banned?"

The answer to that question is that Prozac should not be banned.

On one hand, the risks are small, and on the other hand, the possible benefits outweigh the risks.

So what do Prozac's critics think the drug can do to you? What risks do you take by using the drug? Most critics agree on three potential harms.

Continued on following page

Analysis

Speech

"Schizophrenia" is the **label** for the first subpoint under the first major issue. The label is the brief explanation of what you are about to discuss. Labels should be short and memorable.

The information from the *New York Times* is evidence that supports your argument. The "talking to the walls" comment is an inside joke about the way that students prepare for competition.

This is the second subpoint under the first major issue. Note that following the label "does not help everyone," the speaker offers more evidence. The discussion of how "no drug works for everyone" is **analysis**. Analysis is a detailed examination of the information at hand.

The third subpoint begins here. Again, the speaker provides a label, analysis, and evidence to support his thesis.

This is a summary statement that refers to the entire first major issue.

The transition into the second major issue mentions what went before and foreshadows what is coming next.

The first potential harm is schizophrenia. Studies documented in the *New York Times* show that 12 out of 1,000 patients using Prozac develop schizophrenia. Given the number of people talking to the walls in the prep room for this event, this seems like a small risk indeed.

The second potential harm is that Prozac does not help everyone. Some who take Prozac may expect the drug to work and have their hopes dashed when it doesn't, which may worsen their depression. But, as the *Christian Science Monitor* points out, "no drug is a panacea except chicken soup, of course." No drug works for everyone. And the easiest cure for high expectations is to lower them—then people won't be disappointed if Prozac fails for them.

The third, and perhaps the most frightening, potential harm is addiction. Whether or not the drug works, people might come to depend on Prozac for their happiness, and since the pills are relatively expensive, that could be a costly prospect. The *Wall Street Journal* argues, however, that any drug can become addictive. The *Wall Street Journal* explains that true addiction, actual physical need, is fairly rare and that physicians can stop prescribing Prozac for patients who merely have a psychological need for it.

The risks, then, all things considered, are really quite low.

But what about the benefits? Even a small risk is not worth taking if no benefit can come from it. I'm sure none of us would cross the street in New York unless there was some very good reason to do so. In the case of Prozac, there are two important benefits.

Analysis

Here is the beginning of the first subpoint of the second major issue. Again, you will find a label, analysis, and evidence.

The second subpoint also features a label, analysis, and evidence. Since this is the last subpoint, it should be your strongest argument. Save the best for last.

Quoting Shakespeare in this context shows the speaker's ability to make connections. Hamlet's observation about the nature of perception could be applied to many topics. General Hamlet, for example, might argue that it is difficult to win a war without people's perception that the conflict is justified. Professor Hamlet might argue that people must think that teacher pay raises are necessary for those raises to happen.

This transition leads into the conclusion of the speech. Avoid saying "In conclusion" or other such obvious statements. If you say "final analysis," it implies that you actually had analysis earlier. Be sure to restate the question and your answer. Also, summarize the major issues briefly as the speaker does.

This is the zinger. A **zinger** is a concluding statement that is a powerful reminder of the rightness of your position. The audience will remember best what you say last.

Speech

The first, and most obvious, is that it can cure depression. The *Washington Post* estimates that about 20 percent of the people who take Prozac are cured of their depression. For somebody suffering from this incapacitating mental disorder, this is a significant benefit worth considering.

The second major benefit is the so-called placebo effect. Even if the drug has no actual physiological effect, the *New York Times* reports a high number of people who pull out of depression anyway. Some cases of depression, especially those caused by a lack of confidence, can cure themselves if the people believe they should be cured.

Doctor Hamlet would agree: "There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." The *Times* even notes cases of people who were actually taking sugar pills and who were cured, literally, by the name of the drug. This may not say much for the honesty of Prozac's manufacturers, but if the depression is lifted, even if it be the name that lifts it, Prozac has proven its benefits to outweigh the risks.

So in final analysis, Prozac should not be banned. The small risks of harm are outweighed by the significant potential benefits. Whether or not you want to subject yourself to this particular risk, like that six-minute canoe trip, it must be your decision. You must weigh the risk of harm against each potential benefit each time.

If you do not, you may come to understand the words of philosopher Bertrand Russell all too well: "Some people would die sooner than think. In fact, they do."

SECTION 1 REVIEW

Recalling the Facts

1. What is the difference between extemporaneous speaking and impromptu speaking?
2. How much time do you have to prepare a speech in an extemporaneous competition?
3. How much time do you have to give you speech in an extemporaneous competition?
4. What is a prescriptive topic in an extemporaneous speech?
5. Why do you want to develop a conversational style of delivery?

Thinking Critically

1. Many speakers begin their presentations with a joke. Why might an introduction with a compelling insight be a safer strategy than a humorous introduction?
2. Why would a political candidate have to be a good extemporaneous speaker at a debate with other candidates?

3. Is a basketball coach who speaks to her players at halftime to get them excited about the second half of the game giving an extemporaneous speech or an impromptu speech?

Taking Charge

1. Find the text of a speech from a source such as *Vital Speeches*. Outline a brief section of the speech. Working from this outline, deliver the ideas extemporaneously in your own words. Ad-lib as much as possible. Record your best practice speeches for review and critique.
2. Suppose you are at a extemporaneous competition. You are given the topic: Should the United States have a national service requirement for all high school graduates? Briefly explain how you would prepare for the speech. Where would you look for information? What kind of introduction would you use? Would humor be appropriate for a speech on this subject?

COMMUNICATION *BREAKTHROUGH*



Mallspeak

"I was like, y'know, whatever" just won't cut it anymore. In the world beyond school, students must speak effectively. Employers expect competence and confidence in the people they hire. The imprecise and inarticulate speech of many teenagers, called Mallspeak, caused concern in both the academic and business communities. In fact, companies started telling colleges that they couldn't hire certain graduates because the graduates couldn't communicate in the workplace.

Colleges decided it was time to take action. In the late 1990s Smith College launched its "Speaking Across the Curriculum" program, featuring "speaking-intensive" first-year seminars with special emphasis on oral presentations. As Smith professor Randy Bartlett explained, "We think we haven't educated them well if they can't write well. Why shouldn't we have the same concerns about speaking well?" Other colleges quickly followed suit. M.I.T., Holy Cross, Stanford, the University of Pennsylvania, and Wesleyan College all started similar programs that focused on speaking skills.

Mount Holyoke even established a Speaking Center. Holyoke Professor Rachel Fink initially had *qualms* about trading some of her students' lab time to accommodate the speaking curriculum. Fink incorporated the curriculum by planning a mock scientific convention, titled "Out of the Lab and into Your Life," in which students distributed research papers and presented extemporaneously their latest findings to their distinguished colleagues. It was a trade-off—because of the time involved, "they didn't get to do fly embryos or chick embryos"—and Fink had her doubts.

But when the day of the convention arrived, Fink was blown away. One team reported on environmental estrogens—hormones that are believed to be reducing fertility levels in many species. The presentation lived up to its catchy title. "Those students are going to remember 'Impotent Alligators' forever," Fink said.

Developing strong speaking skills continues to be a big concern on college campuses. How will students speak in another 30 years? If colleges can help it, they definitely won't be speaking Mallspeak.

Questions

1. Try to predict the future. What do you think Mallspeak will have devolved into in 30 years?
2. If you could design a course in public speaking, what would you include?

Impromptu Speaking

Although you may frequently be asked—often to your surprise and dismay—to speak impromptu on almost any occasion, you have actually been preparing for such situations all of your life. You may not be as prepared as you would like, but you have a lifetime of experience from which to draw. The effective speaker selects appropriate supporting materials from memory, organizes them into an easy-to-follow pattern, and delivers them confidently. In other words, you learn how to think on your feet.

Keep It Simple

Since impromptu speeches are generally brief, simplicity is essential. You should establish a single point of view, choose one or two clear examples or illustrations, and conclude with a short summary and restatement of your main idea. If you have more than a few minutes for your impromptu presentation, you should divide the body of your speech into two or three issues and develop each one with supporting materials. Like all speeches, your impromptu presentation should have a definite beginning, middle, and end.

A typical organizational pattern for a brief impromptu speech might include the following:

1. Statement of the main point of your presentation. A short introduction to the main idea can be effective if you have the time (and an idea).
2. Support of the main idea with appropriate reasons,

examples, illustrations, statistics, and testimony. Ordinarily, you should rely on your first thoughts, because if you struggle to generate more information, you may forget your initial ideas.

3. Conclusion with a summary and a restatement of the main idea. Be brief; needless repetition is boring and reduces your credibility as a speaker.

If you are called on in a business meeting and have nothing to say, the worst thing you can do is to apologize. Rather than admitting you're unprepared, take a deep breath, and say something like "I will look into this issue and get back to you."



Business and civic meetings will test your ability to organize impromptu speeches properly.

COMMUNICATION *BREAKDOWN*



A Country of Strangers

Before you speak, you must always consider the wants and needs of your audience. In our multicultural society, choosing the right words in impromptu speaking can be extremely difficult. This challenge is made painfully clear in the story of Barbara Wyche, a noted sociologist. She found that speaking well can intrude deeply into personal and family relationships. According to Wyche, as a young black person, she was never accepted by her black peers. Because of her image as a smart child, she said, “nobody would ask me to dance. You see what I’m saying? They wouldn’t even think I knew how to dance. I had an inferiority complex, because I really wanted people to like me, and I really loved people and I wanted to fit, and I couldn’t fit.”

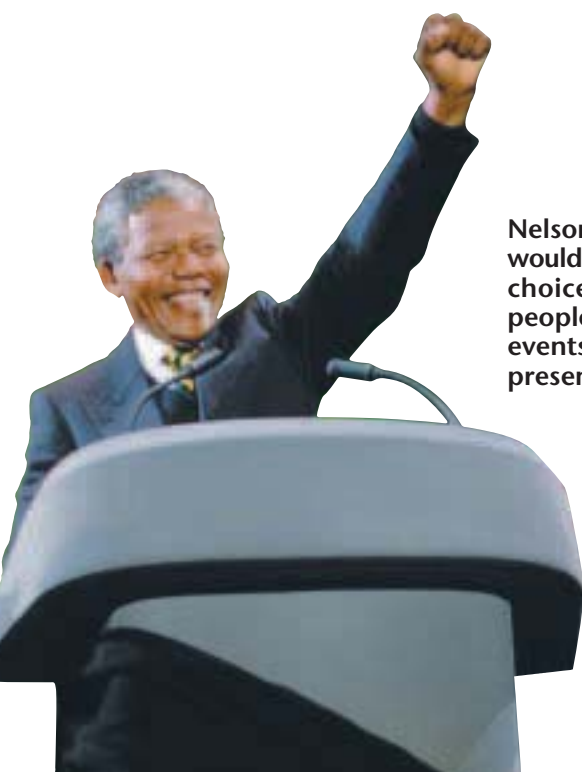
Her father had three years of college and wanted his daughter to attend college as well. He “wanted me to talk, like, very fine, like, ‘Thank you.’” And here she put on an *erudite*, quasi-British accent. “My mother let me know that if I came back talking and acting like some of the people that were teaching, I would not be her child,” Wyche recalled. “That was again picking up those attitudes that we call ‘white.’”

And so the racial imagery *insinuated* itself into the fiber of her family, setting up tensions over class, education, language, and identity that were played out against conflicts between her parents, whose marriage ended when she was ten. “I am a product of class warfare in my own family,” Wyche said.

“I would come home from Johns Hopkins University,” Wyche went on, “and, you know, you pick up this way of talking to each other. I was good at it. . . . So I remember I went home one year, and I told my mother, I said, ‘Mama . . .’ I kept talking and talking and talking, and my mother said, ‘I’m glad you learned how to talk at school’ . . . and I was just talking, talking, talking, and my mama said, ‘Speak English or don’t talk at all.’ I was using GRE and SAT vocabulary. I had made the transition, so my mother didn’t know what I was talking about.”

Questions

1. Do you believe that your friends and relatives judge you by your speech, including your choice of words? Why or why not?
2. How can more-effective communication tear down the barriers that separate people?



Nelson Mandela would be an ideal choice for a people/places/events impromptu presentation.

Don't Panic

Similarly, the worst mistake you can make in an impromptu speech is to panic. Panic usually results in uneasy silence or unnecessary rambling. As a prospective impromptu speaker, you should minimize your concerns by reading widely and by being a good observer and listener. Remember, too, that your audience is aware that you're speaking off-the-cuff and will adjust its expectations accordingly. Most audience members will respond positively if they sense you're trying to incorporate your knowledge into a clear and meaningful presentation.

Getting Ready to Compete

As with extemporaneous speaking, you can polish your impromptu skills through competition. The rules for impromptu speaking, though, vary greatly from contest to contest. The National Forensic League, for example, allows each student five minutes for preparation and then another five minutes to present the speech. At the college level, the American Forensic Association allows a total of seven minutes for both preparation and speaking; the speaker may choose how to divide those minutes.

Generally there are three types of impromptu topics: (1) *words*, such as *orange*, *love*, *greed*, and *happiness*; (2) *quotations*, such as "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," or "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush"; (3) *people/places/events*, such as Nelson Mandela or the Vietnam Veterans Memorial or Hurricane Katrina.

Remember, though, that the key is to practice. Only through practice can you begin to feel comfortable with the pressure of such limited time to prepare. Also, through practice you will become more skilled at connecting what you know to the precise wording of the topic. Of course, increasing what you know by reading more and discussing more would be advisable as well.

To help you with your first competitive impromptu speech, here is a student example on the topic of elephants. Study the comments that accompany the speech on the following pages to learn one effective way that you can organize an impromptu speech.

INSTANT IMPACT

Be a Cabbage

A speaker at a club luncheon gave a tremendous talk and received a standing ovation. The president of the club was so impressed that he said to the speaker, "Everyone here is so enthused. Won't you please say a few more words, since we have ten minutes left of our regular time?"

The request challenged the speaker to draw on all of her impromptu skills. How would you have responded to this difficult situation? This speaker thought for a moment and said, "Once there was a little baby cabbage who said to his mother, 'Mommy, I'm worried about something. As I sit in this row of cabbages and grow and grow day after day, how will I know when to stop growing?' 'The rule to follow,' said the Momma cabbage, 'is to quit when you're a head.'"

Good advice for all of us.

Analysis

Speech

Because you have limited time to come up with an introduction, you must search your memory for appropriate stories, examples, or illustrations. Your first thought should be to brainstorm everything you can think of that has some connection to elephants or whatever the topic happens to be. This brainstorming will not only generate an idea for an introduction but can also give you supporting material for the rest of the speech.

This transition connects the opening illustration with the thesis, or main idea of the speech.

This thesis statement is made more memorable because of the play on the word “mammoth.”

Here the speaker explains what she will discuss in the rest of the speech. This is the “tell ‘em what you’re gonna tell ‘em” step.

The first issue starts with a joke, but note that the speaker then turns to serious concerns. Raising the possibility of extinction gives importance to discussing this particular topic.

There is a story about six visually impaired men touching an elephant. One man feels the tail and says, “Oh, it’s a rope.” One comes in contact with a leg and thinks it’s a tree. Another man grasps the ear and speculates that it’s a fan or a leaf. Still another man walks along the side of the elephant and concludes that it’s a mountain. But none of these men realizes that it’s an elephant.

Although this story illustrates how we must see the whole of anything in order to understand it, it is also true that most of us, in fact, do not recognize the whole importance of the elephant.

I believe that we should not overlook the “mammoth” relevance of these pachyderms.

Let us consider their importance in two areas: the elephants themselves, and what the elephants can teach us about ourselves.

Each elephant makes a significant sacrifice for our benefit. Did you know that every time you munch a peanut butter sandwich, you are grabbing goobers out of the mouths of baby elephants?

On a more serious note, many people have boycotted the use of ivory in products. These people have expressed the concern that elephants are hunted down and destroyed just for their tusks. Furthermore, they have expressed the fear that elephants may become extinct someday as a result of people’s greed.

Continued on following page

Analysis

Here the speaker moves to the second issue. She begins discussing this issue by referring to a familiar children's story. If you can, you too should try to incorporate supporting material that has universal appeal.

This second lesson that we can learn from elephants simply adds further support to the argument. It also reminds the audience that one can learn interesting things by listening in class.

This brief conclusion refers back to the thesis and then ends with a strong last thought. You want the audience to "never forget" you either.

Speech

The selfish slaughter is even more depressing when we consider what elephants can teach us about ourselves. In one of Dr. Seuss's best-loved stories, Horton the elephant promises, "I meant what I said and I said what I meant, an elephant's faithful one-hundred percent." This faith, this commitment, is an important lesson for all of us.

But perhaps the elephant is most familiar to us as the symbol of the Republican Party. We learned in history class that the elephant as a symbol for Republicans came from the imagination of nineteenth-century cartoonist Thomas Nast. Let us not forget that teacher told us that the elephant was chosen because it is clever but not easily controlled—just like so many of us!

So we should be clever enough to remember these powerful pachyderms, for as we all know, the elephant never forgets.

SECTION 2 REVIEW

Recalling the Facts

Name the three elements in a typical impromptu speech's organizational pattern.

Thinking Critically

In *Silent Messages*, Albert Mehrabian argues that a speaker's facial and body language accounts for more than 50 percent of a listener's emotional response. About 40 percent of the response is triggered by nonverbal vocal qualities. The words themselves account for only 10 percent or less of the response. Why do you think that words matter so little?

Taking Charge

Everyone in class is to write three to five impromptu topics—each topic on a separate slip of paper. The slips are then collected, and each student draws three topics. Choose one topic on which to give an impromptu speech. Give yourself a minute to gather your thoughts. Deliver your speech in approximately two minutes.

Evaluate each student's speech to determine if it used the three elements of an impromptu speech outlined in this section.

Tourists and Terrorists *by Austan Goolsbee*

Although this speech was given decades ago, the concern over terrorism has changed little. The speaker is now a professor of economics at the University of Chicago and an economic adviser to presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama, but he recognized the importance of this topic even as a high school student.

When we talk about the problem of international terrorism in the world today, we are talking about the ability of one man to hold an entire nation in fear. And the hostage takers in the Middle East have found out the most effective way to exploit the Western media. They now take someone alive. It is more effective to have a hostage scream in front of a camera than it is to snipe someone from a building. But there is no more poignant question or issue facing us today. After all, just this morning it was reported in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* that an American journalist was taken hostage and beaten by Lebanese hostage takers. So we need to ask a very important question: “Do the Middle East hostage takers have the NATO nations locked in a no-win stranglehold?”

If we look first at the technical inexperience we have in dealing with hostage takers and, second, at the political headlock we’ve gotten ourselves in, we can see that the horrifying answer to this question is yes. But let me explain.

Initially, what we must understand is that we are technically unprepared, and here there are four key factors to consider. And the first is information. Quite simply, we don’t have enough, we don’t exchange what we do have, and we don’t know where to get more. According to the *Wall Street Journal* this morning, finally the Eastern European nations are beginning to come to our aid and they have pledged to exchange information with us. Unfortunately, what the *Wall Street Journal* does not point out is that this information can’t be recalled on the floppy disc of a computer. It is names, it is places, it is times—things that most people, even the experts, don’t understand. We have tried this exchange in the past and it doesn’t work. Without the information, we are in a no-win situation because we don’t know what to do.

The second important factor is our infiltration techniques. Experts on global terrorism say that Western Europeans don’t mix well when they are trying to portray people from the Middle East. This severe problem in infiltrating has resulted in only an estimated .02% of

Middle East terrorist groups being compromised. So what we have to understand is that without infiltration we won’t get access to any more information—more of a no-win situation. In other words, we don’t know where they’re going to strike next.

The third important factor is how we choose to retaliate, or the way we behave. There is a distinct difference between rescue operations and military operations, and we are used to the latter. In fact, *World Press Review* in March points out that the inexperience we have is based on our Western European traditions. We are often faced with IRA bombings and snipers and we have experience with that kind of terrorism. What we don’t know is how to deal with someone holding a live hostage. We don’t want to endanger the lives of hostages. This helplessness only exacerbates our no-win situation.

This leads us to our fourth and final factor. We don’t have any practice. When it comes right down to it, we can’t play games with human lives. And because hostage situations are so rare, we don’t have the opportunity to develop the technical experience to avoid these no-win situations.

Unfortunately, technical inexperience is only part of the problem. To understand the true magnitude of the situation, we must realize that we have a stranglehold on ourselves and are quickly running out of breath. Here there are three important factors we need to consider.

The first is our inability to address the causes of international terrorism. *World Press Review* in May stated that terrorism is usually caused by radical Mideastern groups like Iran’s Islamist groups or radical PLO members who want drastic changes in the international balance of power. However, NATO alliances can’t change the balance of power because of significant domestic opposition. For example, the United States can’t stop terrorism tomorrow by saying we are now opposed to the Israeli nation. Margaret Thatcher can’t suddenly say that the Ayatollah Khomeini is now her best friend. She would

be humiliated before her own people. Another no-win situation.

A second consideration is that we face retaliation. *Newsweek* reminds us that we can't predict what terrorists are going to do when we attack them. Of course, *Newsweek* can't summarize the terror caused by the actions of NATO alliances. In fact, when the United States bombs Libya, Libya decides to take British citizens hostage. And so what happens is these NATO nations, who all have different strategies for dealing with terrorism, are then confronted with a no-win stranglehold because politically we are riding off in all directions at once.

But the final, most important factor is that we end up negotiating with irrational people because that is the only alternative. And it doesn't work. In the book *Getting to Yes*, William Ury argues that in evaluating your nego-

tiation option, you have to look at what your best alternative is. And in the case of Middle East terrorists, your best alternative is to let the hostages die. And so, too often our negotiations result in the very deaths we were trying to prevent.

So, in answering the question "Do Middle East hostage takers have NATO nations in a no-win stranglehold?" if we look first at the technical inexperience we have and second at the political headlock we have ourselves in, we'll see that the answer is simply yes. After all, if we think back to the man who was kidnapped just last night, we can see that terrorism is a fundamental threat to freedom. And that threat limits our freedom to go where we want. We become haunted by the idea that in the Middle East everyone has the right to go anywhere he wants—once.

Looking Back

Listed below are the major ideas discussed in this chapter.

- An impromptu speech is generally delivered off-the-cuff, while an extemporaneous speech is prepared and practiced in advance.
- The key to effective extemporaneous delivery is to develop a conversational quality.
- Extemporaneous speaking contests require that you analyze a current event topic and then prepare a speech on that topic within 30 minutes.
- An impromptu speech should establish a single point of view, choose one or two examples or illustrations, and conclude with a short summary and restatement of your main idea.
- The worst mistake you can make in an impromptu speech is to panic.

Speech Vocabulary

Using the following list, make flash cards. On one side of each card, print each new speech term. On the other side, write the definition. Keep track of the words that give you problems and eliminate the words you can handle.

impromptu
extemporaneous
conversational quality
foreshadowing

justification
compelling insight
topic-specific
label

analysis
zinger

Academic Vocabulary

Create a multiple-choice definition question with three options (a, b, and c) for each of the academic vocabulary words. Example: *Intensify* means (a) to weaken, (b) to strengthen, or (c) to enlarge.

faltering
fiasco

prescriptive
qualms

erudite
insinuated

To Remember

Answer the following based on your reading of the chapter.

1. What is the purpose of the justification step in an extemporaneous speech?
2. What makes a zinger important?
3. What are the advantages of a speech outline?
4. A typical impromptu speech would follow what organizational pattern?

To Do

1. Prepare an outline for your next speech. Read your outline aloud to see whether it works when spoken. Are the main points clear? Is it interesting? Is it persuasive? Is it too long? Revise your speech as needed.
2. Watch *Headline News* on CNN. After two minutes, turn off the television set. Repeat what you heard, combining the wording of the professional announcer with your own. Repeating this exercise every day will increase your working vocabulary, build your fluency, and enhance your knowledge of current affairs.

To Talk About

1. You can learn a great deal from the mistakes of others. Have the class discuss instances where they observed problems in someone's presentations. How do you apply what you have observed?
2. Discuss some of the benefits of participating in extemporaneous speaking competitions. Consider the advantage of being able to organize your thoughts quickly during a timed essay exam. What other skills might you gain from extemporaneous speaking?

To Write About

1. Pick a current event in which you are interested. Now write an essay about this topic, in the form that you have always used for English class. Next write an essay on the same topic, using the form of the model extemporaneous speech in this chapter. Which is the better essay? Why?
2. Pick an impromptu topic from the list of Related Speech Topics below. Write out an

impromptu speech, trying to follow the form of the model impromptu speech in this chapter. Take only a few minutes to prepare and then begin writing. Could you think of enough examples and illustrations?

Related Speech Topics

Extemporaneous

How should Congress reform welfare?

Is there a cure for health care?

What are the long-term effects of Internet shopping?

What is ahead for the stock market?

Impromptu

Scandals

Censorship

War

Work

Astrology