

# How To Judge Impromptu | National Speech & Debate Association

Clip source: [How To Judge Impromptu | National Speech &](#)

## How To Judge Impromptu

### Basic Understanding

Impromptu is a public speaking event where students have seven minutes to select a topic, brainstorm their ideas, outline the speech, and finally, deliver the speech. The speech is given without notes and uses an introduction, body, and conclusion. The speech can be light-hearted or serious. The speech can be based upon prompts that range from nursery rhymes, current events, celebrities, organizations, and more.

### Structure

In an Impromptu round the speaker draws three prompts from an envelope. After drawing the three prompts, the student must select one and begin brainstorming their ideas for the speech. In total, a student has seven minutes. This seven minutes may be divided up by the student however they see fit. For instance, they could brainstorm and outline their ideas for three minutes and then deliver a four-minute speech; or they could brainstorm and outline for one minute and speak for six minutes. There is no minimum amount of time required for brainstorming and no minimum amount of time for speaking. Therefore, the student should work to develop the best possible structure and reasoning in as short amount of time as possible. Sometimes students think it's more impressive to speak longer, but if the ideas aren't clear or well developed, it can detract from the overall performance.

Conversely, a well-thought out but short speech restricts a student's ability to spend adequate time analyzing the prompt. Therefore, examine which students struck the best balance between preparation and speaking. An Impromptu speech follows a basic structure in which a student presents an introduction, body, and conclusion. Similar to other public speaking events, the introduction should provide adequate context for the trajectory of the speech. If a student has illustrated an example, conveyed their chosen prompt, and provided

in greater depth. For example, if a student's thesis focuses on cultivating innovation, they would likely introduce two effective ways to do so and use examples to prove their point. Following this, the student will conclude the speech by reiterating the prompt, thesis, and main arguments.

As a judge, ask yourself if the speaker has created sound arguments, used a structure that was easy to follow, and held your attention for the duration of their speaking time. Students who do well in those three categories have demonstrated effective Impromptu speaking skills.

## Evaluating the Round

When evaluating an Impromptu round, consider three main criteria.

First, **organization**. Does the student have a clear structure to their speech? Are transitions used to move effectively between each part of the speech? Does the development of the speech make sense?

Second, **analysis**. Does the student directly address the prompt? Does the student develop justifications for their ideas and establish significance to the points?

Third, **delivery**. Does the student use voice, movement, and expression effectively? Is the speaker confident? Is there consistent eye contact? Is the volume appropriate?

## Filling Out the Ballot

Performers are ranked compared to the other students in their room with the best performance receiving the one ranking. The judge may also assign speaker points, typically in a range from 90 and 100, with 100 being outstanding.

The judge writes on the ballot how the speaker can improve (e.g., eye contact, clarity, emotion, etc.) and what the student did well. This is an educational activity and all feedback is welcome. Please make sure the feedback is constructive and not merely critical.