

## Table Topics Speaker

Allocated minutes	1:00	1:30	2:00
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### Purpose

Table Topics is the name Toastmasters gives to Impromptu Speaking: the ability to speak 'off the cuff', without preparation and without notes, on a topic you have just been given. This is a regular part of a Toastmasters meeting, and everyone who does not have a (major) speaking role at the meeting should get the opportunity to participate in table topics, or impromptu speaking.

### Impromptu Speaking Tips

Most of the talking we do on a daily basis is impromptu speaking, and so if we can learn how to assemble knowledge and thoughts on any topic at a moment's notice, we will benefit by:

- Being able to think on our feet in meetings, conversations, and many other settings
- Having greater confidence when giving prepared talks, because we know that if we 'lose our place', we can talk intelligently on an impromptu basis for a short while till we're back on track
- Being more skilled in social situations

### Be Mentally Prepared

When you are in a meeting keep on top of what is going on, and every now and then think 'What would I say now if called on to give my views? What aspect would I cover? How would I phrase it?' This will help you be calm and collected when you are called on, because you will have mentally practiced many talks you've never given.

### Take Time

Take some time to get your ideas together - you don't need to give your reply immediately. This not only gives you a few seconds to work out your response, but also gives the impression you are making sure you'll say something worthwhile.

You're also welcome to change the topic (unless you're in a contest situation) or to make something up completely. You may want to practice convincing/entertaining/provoking the audience

### **Structure your speech**

Think of Table Topics as a mini-speech that benefits from a strong opening (e.g. quote or engaging question) as well as from a strong ending (e.g. call to action). You might also want to rely on the power of 3 and/or structure your main parts.

If you need some ideas on how to structure your table topics, try one of the following:

- A compelling (personal or made up) story that relates to the question
- A pro and con list with a conclusion for one side at the end
- A walk through past - present - future (personally or how the topic was treated)

### **A good opening: Start with an Example**

You may want to talk about an incident from your life that relates to the topic and has a human-interest angle. The advantages are:

- It's something familiar to you, and it can reassure you when you most need it - during your first few moments
- You won't have to think so hard about your next sentence as experiences are easy to remember
- You'll get into the swing of speaking and reduce your nerves
- You'll get the audience's attention

### **Be Animated**

If you are externally animated, it has a beneficial effect on your mental processes, as physical activity and the mind are closely related.

If your body is animated, your mind functions at a lively pace.

### **Practice**

The best way to improve is to practice regularly. Effective impromptu speaking, like most skills, requires some work and practice. This is why Table Topics is such a valuable part of a Toastmasters Meeting.