

TABLE TOPICS

(Speeches in Miniature)

Impromptu speaking can be a lot of fun and Table Topics Sessions are usually lively ones. Most Toastmasters can answer topics well and the tongue-tied are few in-number.

New members have the most difficulty, as can be expected, but continuing members can also experience problems in giving **effective** answers on occasions. Too often they lose sight of the objective!

It is easy to allow Table Topics to become a time when a speaker rattles off a few ideas just as they come into his or her mind. But speakers cannot be said to be successful just because they fill the allotted time and have a good presentation. The real criterion of success in impromptu speaking is the art of **saying something specific and constructive on the spur of the moment.**

Table Topics are designed to help us when we face situations where we have to persuade people with word power. And it is a fact that, whether dealing with family or friends, colleagues or customers, the rewards in life go to those who can do so **clearly, concisely and convincingly.**

In Table Topics you will generally be asked to give your opinion on something, to comment on something or to recall an incident. In all cases, the answer should be treated as a mini-speech. To do this you need to **plan** your answer. Here are three plans that can each be used to produce excellent results.

Who, What, When, Where, Why, How

These are the words Rudyard Kipling called his six little servants. Take the subject and relate it to each of these questions in turn as you speak. Jump over one if an immediate thought doesn't occur to you. This is a great plan for new members who have difficulty getting started.

Past, Present, Future

Discuss the topic from each of these three viewpoints in turn.

PREP, standing for Point, Reason, Example, Point

Give a point of view about the subject in your opening statement. Back it with a reason explaining **WHY** you made the statement. Then follow with an example, anecdote or illustration. Conclude by restating your point, modified perhaps by the way your speech has developed in the middle.

Do these plans work? To be convinced, try them. Take a typical topic. For example, "What do you think of sport?" Stand and answer it **NOW** in your usual style. Then try an impromptu speech following each of the above plans in turn. You will be amazed at how much more effective a speech you can give.

The plans, of course, need to be practised like driving so that they become second nature to you. But if you master them you will become known as an effective communicator, someone who can be relied on to come up with the right idea, the right response, the right solution in any situation.

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