

A GUIDE TO **EXTEMPORANEOUS**

SPEAKING

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4th year extemper

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So you want to learn Extemporaneous Speaking. Awesome! The following guide should serve as a starting point for collegiate competition. However, while Extemporaneous Speaking events are relatively standardized, norms and rules may differ based on region and tournament. I would encourage you to consult with your coach or a tournament organizer to ensure you understand any specific rules the guide may not cover.

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Rules Overview

Extemporaneous Speaking is a limited-preparation speech event. Competitors are expected to answer a question, typically political or economic in nature. Competitors will prepare for thirty minutes, outline their speech on a notecard, and use any remaining time to practice the speech itself. Once their thirty minutes have elapsed, competitors will proceed to deliver a seven-minute speech.

Speech Format

While Extemporaneous Speeches can be formatted in multiple ways, the following guide will explain three-point speeches. Three-point speeches (unsurprisingly, given the name) demand the speaker to come up with three unique and differentiated points to provide reasoning for their answer. The below outline walks through the general structure of an Extemporaneous Speech, with explanations for each section provided below. The notecard section advises as to how the three-point structure can translate onto a notecard.

Outline

Introduction

Attention Grabbing Device

Significance Statement + Evidence

Question

Answer

Analysis Preview

Point 1

Evidence A

Analysis

Evidence B

Analysis

Tieback

Point 2

Evidence A

Analysis

Evidence B

Analysis

Tieback

Point 3

Evidence A

Analysis

Evidence B

Analysis

Tieback

Conclusion

Analysis Review

Closing Commentary

Explanations

Attention Grabbing Device (AGD) – The AGD serves to ease the audience into the speech. The AGD can be a pithy joke, providing interesting background knowledge, or referring in broad strokes to the importance of the situation at hand. Two key factors must be considered for the AGD. First, the AGD must engage the audience. They will be listening to an analysis of a complex topic for the next several minutes, the speaker needs to draw the audience in to the speech before diving into the complicated bits. Second, the AGD must be appropriate for the topic at hand. Making a dry joke about seeing Teslas everywhere would be a great fit for a question about electric vehicles. Starting off an analysis of international conflict with a joke, on the other hand, will come off as insensitive and immediately alienate the audience. Starting off such a speech by making reference to the significance of international conflict in an increasingly globalized world would

be much more advisable. The speaker should use their best judgement to ensure the AGD will make the speech more palatable and will not upset the audience and judges. The speaker should segue from the AGD to providing a more specific look at what topic they will be exploring (without using the exact wording of the question).

Significance Statement – The significance statement tells the audience why they need to care about the topic being discussed today. Speakers should add a source with evidence here. The evidence brings gravity – crucial for a significance statement. An example of such a statement could be “It is critical that we examine this topic today, because as NPR notes on July 10th, 2024, first-generation EVs are reaching the end of their lifecycle. Yet, the U.S. does not currently have close to enough lithium-ion battery recycling plants to meet demand, leaving consumers with hazardous waste and no means by which to dispose of it.”

Question - Once the speaker provides a clear reason for the audience to consider their speech, they should introduce the exact topic they were presented with. For example – “As such, we must ask today’s question: How can the United States prevent environmental hazards stemming from electric vehicle battery disposal?” When addressing the question, the speaker can read directly from the slip of paper containing the topic to ensure they do not inadvertently misquote the question. Try to read the question slowly and with some gravitas, allowing for clear understanding from the audience and judges.

Answer and Analysis Preview – After reading the question, the speaker should read their answer. If answering a yes-or-no question or choosing between a set number of options, always follow up the answer with a “because”. For instance, if the question is “Which Democratic candidate would have the best chance to challenge a JD Vance presidential run in 2028?” the speaker should not answer with “Pete Buttigieg.” Instead, they should say something to the effect of “The answer to this question is clear – Pete Buttigieg, because he has the greatest ability to build a broad tent of support. We can understand this through three key lenses of analysis...”. When answering a question, each of the points should fit under the answer. Using the Buttigieg answer as an example, the competitor’s points should probably not discuss what a great speaker he is while not mentioning coalition-building, since their answer mentioned his ability to build a broad tent of support. In some instances, the speaker is not required to follow up

with a “because” statement. Borrowing from the topic about electric vehicles outlined in the above question section, the question asks us to outline an approach for U.S. policy. An acceptable answer to the above question might be “The United States must incentivize private investment in lithium battery recycling. They can do so in three ways...”. Regardless of how the speaker formats their answer to the question being posed, they will always preview their three-pronged analysis. The preview will have the speaker make mention of each of the three points to be brought up during the speech. Referring back to the JD Vance question, a preview may look like – “We can understand why Pete Buttigieg is the Democrat’s best chance at challenging JD Vance through three key lenses of analysis. First, his mobilization of the youth vote. Second, his unique ability to reach across the aisle. And third, his pull with suburban swing-voters.”

Points – After the preview, the speaker will launch into their first point of analysis. The speaker should reiterate the point tagline once more “First, Buttigieg’s mobilization of the youth vote will be crucial for Democrats.” Then, the speaker should provide two pieces of evidence to back up their point. The speaker should avoid just reading the sources and moving on. Instead, they should provide their analysis after each source, explaining the evidence’s significance and impact. After unpacking both pieces of evidence, the speaker should tie the point back to the topic at hand. “It is clear that Buttigieg resonates with youth voters, and we’ve seen that youth voters are crucial to past Democrat election victories. Therefore, Buttigieg is an exceptionally strong candidate to challenge JD Vance.” Then, the speaker should segue into their next point. “But Buttigieg’s strength doesn’t just lie in his ability to mobilize the youth vote. He also has a unique ability to reach across the aisle.” The following two points should follow the same formula as the first. The speaker cites two credible sources, analyzes them, and then ties the point back to the overall topic.

Conclusion – After the speaker goes over their final point they should move to the conclusion of the speech. The speaker should restate their question and answer, then review their points. “And so, in returning to today’s question: Which Democratic candidate would have the best chance to challenge a JD Vance presidential run in 2028? We answered Pete Buttigieg, because he has the greatest ability to build a broad tent of support. First, his ability to mobilize the youth vote will prove crucial for a Democrat victory. Second, he has a unique strength in reaching across the aisle to sway

moderate Republicans. And third, his pull with suburban swing voters will deliver key swing counties.” Finally, the speaker should use any time remaining to return to the general theme. The conclusion is like a concluding paragraph for an essay, summarizing the speech and offering closure.

Notecard

Notecard formatting is a crucial part of a quality extemporaneous speech. Speakers must strike the correct balance of how much information to put on their notecard. Too much information makes the card hard to read and makes the card difficult to reference quickly. Too little information risks the speaker forgetting or mixing up critical information. While speakers may develop their own formula for what they add to their notecards and what they leave out, the following serves as a good starting point. On the notecard, all evidence should contain the name of the source cited and date published, as well as the key pieces of information from the source.

AGD – Source (source, date)

! (Analysis and significance statement)

Question – (don’t write out, read from slip)

Answer – (Write out full answer)

Point 1 – Tagline

Evidence A (source, date)

! (Analysis + relevancy to argument)

Evidence B (source, date)

! (Analysis + relevancy to argument)

Point 2 – Tagline

Evidence A (source, date)

! (Analysis + relevancy to argument)

Evidence B (source, date)

! (Analysis + relevancy to argument)

Point 3 – Tagline

Evidence A (source, date)

! (Analysis + relevancy to argument)

Evidence B (source, date)

! (Analysis + relevancy to argument)

Speakers generally should use notecard space sparingly. Analysis and relevancy can be kept to just a few words on the notecards, and speakers should attempt to avoid writing down full sentences from sources (save for giving direct quotes). Instead, speakers should write down key words to remind the speaker during the speech of the content they seek to discuss. For instance, rather than writing down “The Hill (August 2nd, 2024) - Buttigieg was the most popular, with 58 percent of Democratic voters or Democratic-leaning independents saying they approve of him as a possible vice president”, the competitor might write “The Hill (August 2nd, 2024) – Buttigieg most popular Dem VP, 58%” The speaker, of course, is expected to fill in the gaps during their speech. The notecard is meant to serve as a reference point for the speaker, not something to be read verbatim. With practice, using the notecard minimally in extemporaneous speaking becomes second-nature and allows speakers to focus more time and energy on offering compelling analysis.

The Prompt

In Extemporaneous Speaking, understanding the prompt is essential to delivering a successful speech. Typically, the prompt is formatted in the form of a question. However, in some instances the prompt is a statement.

Types of Prompts

Generally, Extemporaneous Speaking Prompts are divided into two main categories: domestic and international. Within the two categories, speakers will receive topics asking the speaker to analyze politics, social issues, policy, and/or economics.

Competitors should familiarize themselves with the Extemporaneous Speaking prompt known as the triad. A triad asks speakers to analyze the relationship between three different actors, asking how X’s *action* towards Y effects Z. One example of a triad topic is “How should the United States respond to North Korea increasing their military ties with Russia to increase their influence in the Asia-Pacific region?” Triad topics are particularly difficult because they demand the speaker analyze the action in question and the impact on a third party. Triads can be found in both domestic and international prompts.

Examples of prompts include:

Domestic

Will the impeachment of Secretary Mayorkus have an impact... on anything?

Does the WeWork bankruptcy signal a shift in work practices?

Predict the winner of the 2024 Presidential election by analyzing the candidates' chances in battleground states.

How will the planned redevelopment of the Brooklyn Marine Terminal impact New York City's economy?

What effect will new AI technologies have on the U.S. healthcare sector?

How can the United States address the national debt in the long term?

Should Taylor Swift run for President under the Democratic ticket in 2028, who could stop her?

Will geothermal energy become a meaningful player in the U.S. energy industry?

How can Democrats take advantage of the SCOTUS' presidential immunity decision to ensure the survival of our democracy?

International:

Should the British government call for an early election?

What would be the geopolitical impacts of a Western abandonment of Ukraine?

Is Australia poised to slam shut its open-door immigration policy?

How will the acceleration of the Israel-Iran conflict impact the Russian oil industry?

How can the international community push back against Myanmar's suppression of internet access for citizens?

What does Moldova's presidential election result mean for Russia?

Will Scotland rejoin the European Union?

How can Argentina respond to China's Chancay port in Peru to strengthen their economic position in South America?

Topic Draw

Extemporaneous speakers are expected to receive and research their topics before each round in a room designated for “Extemp Draw” at the beginning of the tournament. Speakers are given a slip of paper containing potential topics. Oftentimes, speakers are given three topics. The speaker may select one to address in their speech. Topic selection presents an opportunity for speakers to pick the topic they feel will give them the greatest competitive advantage. While a speaker may be tempted to immediately pick a familiar question, doing so is not always advisable. The speaker should consider how interesting and novel the topic will be for the audience. If a speaker selects a commonly discussed topic or a topic commonly seen in Extemporaneous Speaking, the speaker should be prepared to offer unique analysis to make the speech stand out. Otherwise, they risk their speech, no matter how well-executed, coming off as trite. If the topic the speaker selects is not well-worn, their speech is less likely to come off as “having been done before”.

Research and Sources

As previously mentioned, speakers have up to thirty minutes to research for their speech. Any extra time left after researching may be dedicated to practicing the speech itself. Competitors should spend their research period finding pieces of evidence for their speech and familiarizing themselves with the topic at hand.

Finding Sources

Pieces of evidence should be taken from reputable sources. Reputable sources include (but are not limited to) NPR, Reuters, The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, The Chicago Tribune, The Associated Press, PBS, Forbes, The Economist, BBC, Foreign Policy Magazine, and the Council on Foreign Relations. Pulling evidence from a generally unreputable or highly biased source, such as Wikipedia or Newsmax, risks harming the credibility of the speech.

Citing Sources

Over the course of a speech, competitors are expected to provide sources to back up their claims and provide context for the topic. Speakers

must cite sources properly by stating the name of the source and the publishing date of the relevant evidence. Additionally, mixing up phrasing to ensure the speech does not come off as stale is advisable. Examples of ways to cite sources include:

“According to the Associated Press on November 11th, 2024...”

“The New York Times informs us on November 11th of this year...”

“The Economist explains as of just three hours ago...”

“The BBC claims in an article published yesterday...”

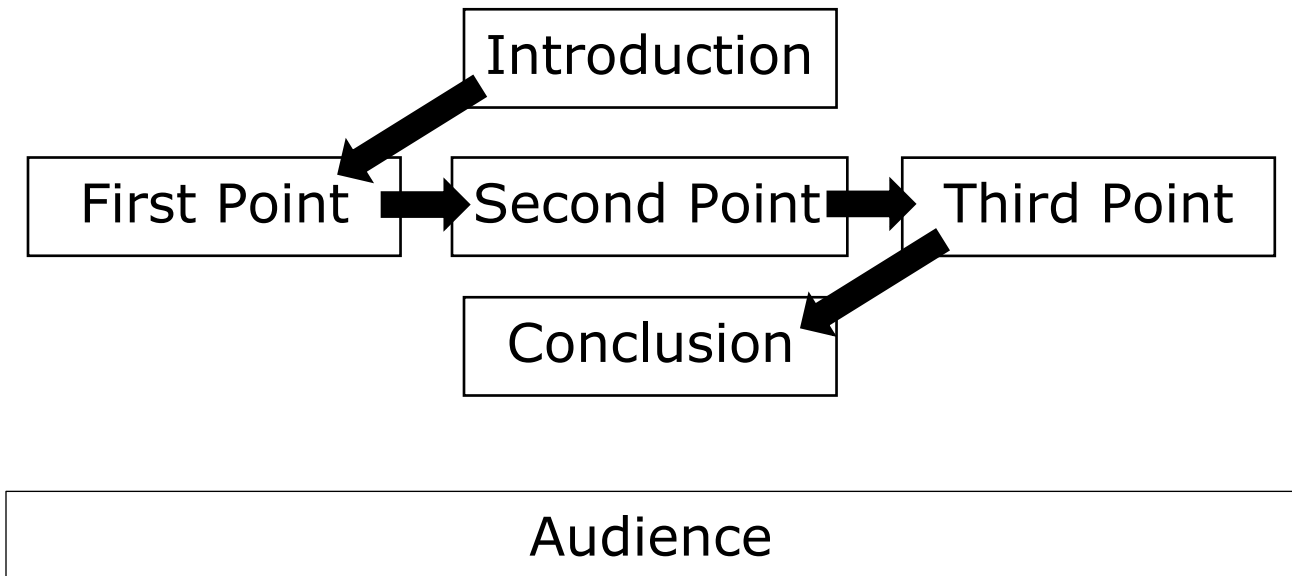
“PBS News finds on November 11th, 2024...”

The Speech

Once preparation time has elapsed, the competitor will enter their competition room to deliver their speech. The speaker should be let in by the former speaker, provided they are not speaking first. Waiting to be let into the room ensures speakers do not inadvertently walk in during a competitor’s speech. Competitors should strive to deliver their speech confidently and seek to engage their audience.

Three-Point Walk

During their speech, speakers should be prepared to move (if able) at each transitional period during their speech. Movement gives a physical indication of the speaker moving to a new portion of their speech. For a three-point speech, speakers should move as they transition from introduction to first point, from first point to second point, from second point to third point, and from third point to conclusion. A typical “three-point walk” should look something like the following:



Delivery

While giving the speech, competitors should make use of hand gestures deliberately to accentuate the speech. Speakers should avoid “rat gestures” (small hand gestures while the arms lie mostly at the speaker’s sides) and instead make use of the arm while gesturing. During the introduction, speakers should use a hand gesture for each major point the speaker plans to cover, mirroring their walk. While using deliberate gestures may sound complicated and difficult, such gestures quickly become a habit if practiced. Using the above three-point walk as an example, the speaker should gesture with their right hand when previewing their first point, both hands when previewing their second point, and left hand when previewing their third point. Doing so creates parallelism with the audience – for instance, walking to your right for the first point parallels the right-handed gesture. The above walk and gestures are not the only patterns speakers could make use of, and speakers will naturally gravitate towards a pattern they personally find comfortable. The goal, however, should always be to use hand gestures in a calculated and deliberate manner to enhance the speech.