

Impromptu Topics

Beginner Public Speaking



Masters Academy

6 Palm Card Tips For Beginner Speakers

Getting Started

Using palm cards can be nerve wracking, especially for people new to debating or public speaking! Whilst there is no 'right and wrong' when it comes to palm card use, here are some handy tips.

1. Don't forget your cards. Make sure that you prepare yourself the day before your competition by putting your cards in an obvious place that you will not forget in the morning (in a sandwich bag next to your lunch on the kitchen table is generally a safe bet).

2. Don't overuse your cards. Overusing your cards can break your eye contact with the audience, making your speech less engaging. To counteract this, try videoing your speech and identifying the parts that make you look down at your cards so that you can rehearse further.

3. Size your cards. You should aim to ensure that you don't have any cards that are bigger than your hands or smaller than your palm! Going with cards that are too small means that you'll be transitioning from card to card far too often in the speech, whereas cards that are too large can be distracting to the audience.

4. Use cardboard where possible. Printing out your speech and gluing it to cardboard can give you that extra bit of confidence before going into a speaking event or task. This trick is great to ensure that your cards are easy to read and less likely to get damaged by the elements.

5. Number your cards. In the event that something in your speech goes a little 'pear shaped', you'll be relying on your trusty palm cards to help you recover. Placing distinct and easy to read numbers on one of the top corners of your cards will help you get things back on track without too much fuss.

6. Use colour effectively. Coloured paper or cardboard doesn't just look fancy, it's also a fantastic way to organise things; especially speeches. Different coloured cards can be used to remind you of different emotions or distinct parts of the speech. Just remember to keep the card size down - rainbow cards can be very distracting!

14 Examples of Impromptu Topics

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The majority of these impromptu topics have been used in competitions such as the *Legacy Public Speaking Competition*, *Multicultural Perspective Public Speaking Competition* and the *Sydney Morning Herald Plain English Speaking Award*.

Impromptu speeches often make students more nervous than prepared speeches, as they are on the spot, have limited notes to speak with, and can get easily flustered if they run short on things to say.

Practicing impromptu speaking in front of a group is the single best way to improve - we recommend our 'Mad Minute' game to improve impromptu speaking as a class - see our separate resource on how to play this game.

When practicing, we recommend varying the length of preparation time in order to prepare for a variety of speaking scenarios. As you improve, gradually reduce the amount of time you get to prepare your speech and/or the amount of notes you are allowed to use when speaking.

A true impromptu speech is done with minimal to no preparation time or notes.

To practice impromptu skills solo, give yourself 5 minutes or less to prepare a 2 minute speech on one of the topics below. Concentrate on developing a clear structure, flow and theme for the speech.

Example Topics

- I have a dream
- Being young is over-rated
- The slip
- Home is where the heart is
- The power of one
- Make my day
- Outside the box
- Gold, Gold, Gold
- Turn on the lights
- Think big
- My hero
- Its what's on the inside that counts
- That the cabbage is better than the rose
- Reach for the sky