

**Domestic Extemp**

**For Intelligent Individuals**



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# Domestic Extemp For Intelligent Individuals

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## Author's Note

Dear Reader,

I remember reading a book in high school called "Debate for Dummies" and thinking how such a title grossly misrepresented a large population of its readers. In the spirit of correctly representing my readers who are, no doubt, well spoken and well informed persons, I have named my handbook "Domestic Extemp for Intelligent Individuals."

This handbook was written with one simple purpose: To help you win. Its contents are *not* meant to teach you the complicated art of public speaking. Instead, this handbook will give you instructions for how to construct and deliver a domestic extemporaneous speech with the goal of giving you the competitive advantage over your opponents.

As a former Oklahoma Domestic Extemporaneous champion, my experience has given me a unique perspective of this event which I would like to share with you. I am providing a guiding reference for students, not a narrative. So parts of the handbook may be more relevant than others at certain times. Use what follows as a tool to help you improve yourself in domestic extemporaneous speaking.

Sincerely,

James M. Proszek  
Bishop Kelley High School  
Class of 2008

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# Section I: Before Drawing

## (A.) Research

Just as any quarterback must practice his passing before the big game or a racer must run practice laps to get a good feel for the track, so too must a good speaker research the topics on which he or she will potentially speaking. Consider this question:

“Is the U.S. successfully lowering teen obesity rates?”

Would formal evidence of *how* America is or is not lowering obesity rates help this speech? Yes. Is formal evidence necessary to answer the question? No. You could most likely answer this question without the aid of statistics and expert testimony. But what if this same question were asked in a slightly different way:

“Which programs have effectively helped the U.S. fight obesity rates among teens?”

Good luck answering that question on the spot. In order to succeed in this event, you must know a great deal of information on a wide range of topics. The best way to gain that information is to constantly research both current and historically significant events.

## (B.) Best Ways to Conduct Research

Many students consider research a loathsome task—perhaps you are one of them. This is primarily because students think of research as a very rigid academic definition which Dr. Rowland Collins of New York University describes as “hard and disagreeable work” searching for “facts and solid proof.”<sup>1</sup>

Staying informed does not have to be a burden to you as an extemper. Sure, you could spend hours upon hours in the library pouring over pages of research. You would surely have a competitive edge if you did this. But there are more efficient ways to conduct your research:

**Magazines** such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *The Economist* feature great domestic news articles and op-ed pieces. Take just a few minutes during your day to read one or more of these magazines and highlight and save the important articles.

**Newspapers**, like magazines, are helpful print sources for staying on top of the news. Although the comics might be your favorite section, take a moment to look at the front page of the *New York*

*Times*, *USA Today*, or your local paper for what is happening in the world, particularly in the United States.

**Internet Articles**, whether academic or an electronic version of a news media such as CNN.com or Reuters, are probably the easiest way to gain factual knowledge of current events. Also look for databases created specifically for aiding students with research such as West Coast Publishing's [website](#).<sup>2</sup>

Notice I have left out Wikipedia in this section. The main problem with online news sources is the issue of credibility. When researching a topic it is important to know not only *what* is being said, but also *who* is saying it.

### **(C.) Why Do Research?**

Research is the fundamental building block for domestic extemporaneous speaking. Without good research and preparation, you cannot become a consistently effective speaker, just as a quarterback cannot perform well during a game if he has not thrown a single pass during the previous week of practice. Consider the opinion of former debater and analyst for a Washington D.C. consulting firm, Brad Meurrens:

**“Research skills are an important facet of not only academic life, but also the ‘real world...’ the importance of fully**

**developing and honing research skills (especially in electronic media) cannot be dismissed.”<sup>3</sup>**

If you want to be the best speaker in domestic extemporaneous speaking, you have to put in most of the work before you even begin your speech. The research stage of extemp is what separates the champions and the National qualifiers from everyone else.

### **(D.) Preparing Your Box**

Let's assume that after taking my advice you have thoroughly read, gathered, and saved your research. How do you use that research when it comes time to speak?

Competitors in domestic extemporaneous speaking will generally put their research into large boxes which they are then allowed to consult during their speech preparation time at a tournament.<sup>4</sup> Commonly known as “tubs” to extempers, a domestic extemporaneous box is perhaps the most powerful tool available to the speaker. There are six steps that every extemper should take to prepare the most useful box:

**1. Magazines should be labeled:** If you plan to use an entire issue of a magazine, say *The Economist*, it is important to clearly label the important articles with tabs so that

you do not waste time searching through the entire magazine. You can also remove individual articles from the magazine and place them in a folder under a specific topic.

## **2. Keep newspapers to a minimum:**

Although newspapers are very informative, they can take up space fast. Only newspapers within a day or two of the tournament should be kept in your box. Important articles from a newspaper should be cut and filed under specific topics in folders.

## **3. Create General Categories and**

**Sub Categories:** If your box contains full information about the latest political actions, their consequences, and expert insider analysis of both, you will have an extremely helpful box. That is, until you draw a question about the last space shuttle launch. An extemp box should contain several general categories such as politics, education, sports, science, popular culture, economics, and other broad topics. General categories can help a speaker answer a diverse array of questions. Trust me, during a tournament no two questions are exactly alike.

Sub-categories are also important for helping an extemper better focus his or her research. An example of a good sub-category in a box would be "Recent Midterm Congressional

Elections" under the general category of "Politics."

**4. Keep Your Files in Order:** After drawing your question you only have 30 minutes to write your speech (we will talk more about time limits in the next section) so don't spend the majority of your preparation time trying to find all of the evidence you want to use. Keeping your files in some sort of organizational pattern will help you quickly find what you are looking for, giving you more time to devote to your speech.

The easiest way to organize your files is by alphabetical order...it worked for me in high school. However, chronological order or another creative pattern might work better for you. So long as there is consistency with your files, you will greatly benefit from structured organization.

**5. Inspect Your Box Regularly:** In September of my junior year, our high school debate team was cleaning out the speech and debate closet affectionately named "the abyss." In it we found an extemp tub that some of our graduated seniors had used the year before. In the tub was a lovely ham sandwich turned black and soupy from a hot, dry summer in a darkened space.

Before and after each tournament you should check your box to make sure you have all the necessary files and magazines in the proper order. Clean out anything that does not belong—including ham sandwiches.

### **6. Remove Outdated Information:**

New news can become old news extremely fast. Make sure that your box does not contain any outdated or irrelevant information. This requires constant research and good judgment.

If you are still relying on a 1999 issue of *Science Innovation Quarterly* for the latest in technological development, I'm willing to bet you that moldy ham sandwich you will not find very useful information.

### **(E.) Cutting Evidence to Put in Your Box**

Now that you know *how* to put your box together, it is important to know *what* will actually go into the files you have made. The National Forensic League, which is the governing body of domestic extemporaneous speaking, has several guidelines for what competitors can use during speech preparation time at a tournament.<sup>5</sup> These are just a few of the basic rules regarding evidence in your box:

#### **1. Use Only Original or Xeroxed Copies of Original Sources:**

Magazines and articles in journals must be from the original source OR must be a direct copy of the original source. For example, if you want to use an article from a September issue of *The Economist*, your box must either have the actual article that was in the magazine or a scanned copy of the article. You cannot rewrite the article, even if it is word for word, and use it in your box.

Information from an online news source can be printed out. If you want to use an article from CNN.com you are allowed to use a copy from your printer, so long as the copy clearly shows the article's origin (CNN logo).

#### **2. The Evidence Must Be Unaltered:**

If you decide to use an article in your box, you must include the entire article. If you want to use an article from a magazine, newspaper, or printed online source, you cannot only stick one page of the article in your box and leave the rest at home. Everything must be included. This also means that you cannot cut out or mark out any part of the article that is unappealing to you. Simply put: Evidence must be complete.

#### **3. Do Not Write Notes On Your Evidence:**

This rule is probably the most violated in a tournament. Your evidence cannot have any marks by a pencil, pen, crayon, marker, or any



other drawing device, period. Students have a habit of writing helpful notes or important points on the sides of an article or circling, underlining, and starring certain information.

This “habit” can be penalized with disqualification from the tournament. So if you need to make notes for a particular article, do it on another page during the round.

**4. Yellow Highlighters Are the ONLY Exception:** The NFL does allow highlighters to be used to mark an article. However, highlighters must be one color, yellow, and may only highlight information in the article, i.e. you cannot write notes to yourself in highlighter.

**In conclusion:** Putting evidence in your box should not be a nightmare of red tape and regulations. Just include the entire original article, do not mark on it with anything but a yellow highlighter, and do not write notes on the article and your box will be ready to go.

#### **(F.) Time Limits**

The last part of this section will cover the time limits for preparing and giving an extemporaneous speech. It is important to know the time limits of a speech so that you may practice an extemp round at home or at school

before you actually go to a tournament.

With the National Tournament as the exception, state organizations govern the time limits for preparation and speaking in the tournament events. Although states do not, for the most part, vary from the NFL time limits, it is important to understand the time limits for each state organization. In Oklahoma the Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association (OSSAA) is the governing body for speech events. I use their time limits for this handbook because those were the time limits I competed with when I was in high school. They are as follows:

**Preparation:** Preparation time starts when your name or speaker number is called by the moderator in the drawing room. You will spend the first few minutes of your time selecting your question (we will cover the actual draw itself later).

The entire preparation time for a speaker is 30 minutes.<sup>6</sup> During this time a speaker will gather evidence, construct his or her speech, and, with time permitting, rehearse the speech. Preparation takes place in the drawing room only. Sometimes time signals are given by the moderator to let speakers know how much time is left. For

example, a moderator might say, “10 minutes left for Speaker 3.”

It is a good idea to keep a personal timing device, if allowed, during your preparation time so that you can constantly keep track of how much time you have remaining.

**Speaking Time Limits:** After your preparation time has ended the moderator will alert you to move into your speaking room. The speech you will give has a minimum and a maximum time limit in which a speech must be completed.

The minimum time for an extemp speech is set at 4 minutes.<sup>7</sup> Depending on the tournament, a speaker who fails to give a speech longer than 3:59 will be penalized by finishing one place-level lower than ranked by the judge or judges present. So if a speaker finished 7<sup>th</sup> in a group of 8 but only spoke for 3 minutes, he or she would then finish 8<sup>th</sup> by penalty.

The maximum time for a speech is 7 minutes, with a ten second “grace period.”<sup>8</sup> If a speaker finishes at 7:05, he or she will not be penalized because they are within the grace period, but if the speech finishes at 7:11, the same penalty for speaking under time will apply.

**Time Signals:** During your speech you have the right to request time signals

from the judge or time keeper in the room. Signals can either be given counting down from 7 minutes or up starting when you speak. If a time keeper or judge fails to accurately display time signals when requested, the speaker will not be penalized. However, if the speaker does not request time signals, he or she will still be penalized for going over or under time.

My advice? If you are a beginner, practice speeches at home or at school until you can reach four minutes, then enter a tournament. Use your right to time signals because they can be a helpful tool and sometimes a warning for long-winded speakers.

## Section II: During the Extemp Draw

### (A.) Procedure

If you have participated in an extemp draw before, please feel free to skip over to the part (B). However, if you are new to this event (yes, you can admit it) then you should read this part first. Here is a brief tutorial of an extemp draw for a beginner.

**Step One: Enter the room where the extemp draw will be held.**

Extemporaneous speaking is a fairly large event, so it is usually held in an auditorium or gymnasium. You should always show up to the draw 15 minutes early so you can find a seat and set your extemp tubs in a secure location.

**Step Two: When the draw begins, sit down next to your tubs and wait for your speaker number to be called by the moderators.**

At the front of the room a group of coaches or judges called “moderators” are in charge of the extemp draw. They will begin the draw and answer any questions you have prior to the start of the event.

Before you enter the draw you will be put in a numerical speaking order.

Your speaking number is based on what order you are on the list. While waiting for your number to be called, you must remain absolutely silent.

**Step Three: When your number is called you will approach the drawing table. You will be able to draw **five** questions from an envelope and ultimately select **one** of the three questions you have drawn.<sup>9</sup>**

The questions you will draw will be face-down (you will not see them until you draw) and you may draw **only** five questions. After you read each question and make your selection, turn the other four questions face-down and return with your question to your seat.

**Step Four: Begin your research with your question in hand at your seat. Do not lose your question as you will need it to give to the judges later. When your time is up, proceed from the draw to your assigned speaking room**

And now you have successfully completed your first extemp draw. Again, if you have any questions you should ask the moderators. Teammates can help you also, but only before the round begins.

## (B.) Types of Questions

Scholars such as David Zarefsky (a name you probably will not hear until college) have divided formal questions into three general categories.<sup>10</sup> Here are the three types of questions with a corresponding example and an explanation of how they differ from one another:

**Question of Fact: Was Barack Obama elected as the President of the United States in 2008?**

Questions of fact are either true or false depending upon the available empirical evidence. If we check the Federal Government's final tally of the electoral votes from the 2008 election we can conclude that Obama was elected as President in 2008.

**Questions of Value: Should voters re-elect Barack Obama in 2012?**

Questions of value are relative to the relevant beliefs and ideals of the audience to which the question is asked. Although empirical facts can help aid in the answer to a values question, the answer will ultimately depend upon which facts are the most *valuable* to the audience.

**Questions of Policy: Should the United States Federal Government disband the Electoral College?**

Questions of policy incorporate both facts and values and ask the audience to make a choice about real events. For example, if a speaker makes a compelling case for why the electoral process takes away the importance of small states and encourages the audience to value equality, the audience could be persuaded to take actions to dissolve the Electoral College.

## (C.) Types of Responses

Certainly these general categories will be helpful for understanding what type of research and evidence will go into your response to the question you draw. For example, if you draw a question of policy it will be important to incorporate empirical information about the policy.

But these general categories alone do not help an extemper construct a detailed answer to his or her chosen question. They can only tell us what type of evidence should be included into the speech.

Scholars have generally agreed that certain words that begin a question such as "who," "where," and "why" will invoke fundamentally different responses in the audience,<sup>11</sup> but do not discuss their findings in terms of the extemporaneous speech. Therefore, I

shall do it here by discussing common question beginnings and the types of responses that they demand:

**Who, Where, Which, and When:**

These four questions demand a specific answer from the speaker. The question could be a question of fact, value, or policy, and the speaker will still need to provide only one singular answer to the question. Here are some examples:

**Who** has the best chance to win the 2012 Presidential election?

**Where** will the U.S. look to fill oil demand in the next 10 years?

**Which** city in the United States is the best choice to host the 2020 Olympics?

**When** will American troops withdraw from Iraq?

If your question contains one of these first four words, you should immediately think of your answer. If you do not have one immediately in your mind you should probably discard the topic. Even if the question could have multiple answers, you need to specifically state each possible answer instead of giving a generic answer if you want to do well.

**Is/Will, Do/Does, and**

**Could/Would/Should:** This group of questions is so large because they all

demand the simplest response: Yes or no. Again, from the examples:

**Is** the Supreme Court merely an extension of legislative political ideology?

**Will** the use of solar energy in the United States substantially increase in the next 5 years?

**Do** Republicans stand a chance in 2012?

**Does** BP's Gulf of Mexico oil spill spell disaster for the company?

**Could/Would/Should** the U.S. ever repay its outstanding debts to China?

Each of these questions should immediately inspire a “yes” or “no” response in your mind. You might be saying that there are not always clear-cut answers to these types of questions. This is true, but if you want to convince a judge during your speech, you need to come up with better reasons than “I don’t know.” If the question is heavily debatable, you should be able to provide reasons for why the answer is “yes” and why the answer is “no” from different points of view. Even if you conclude that the answer is “maybe” you still have to give reasons for and against the subject of the topic.

**How and Why:** These last two questions are very unique and, from

my experience, are chosen the most often. This trend is not surprising because these questions demand a detailed, but essentially open response from the speaker. Let's look at our final examples:

**How can America reduce its dependence on foreign oil?**

**Why do reality television shows have such a big impact on American culture?**

A speaker who answers these two types of questions should be prepared to give a detailed response with plenty of evidence to support his or her position. However, the benefit of these types of questions is that the speaker has complete freedom to answer the question. The answers are as expansive as the speaker's imagination.

**(D.) Choosing Your Question**

Now that you know the three general types of questions and the types of responses that certain questions demand, you should be able to pick a question that best fits your evidence and speaking strengths.

Remember, there are five questions that you will draw at one time. You are allowed to draw new questions from an envelope, or from a pile of face down questions that other speakers

have eliminated. How should you choose your question?

No one has yet conducted a study which recommends the number of discarded and new questions a speaker should choose (imagine that). However, from personal experience I have found that the biggest factor in determining which set you should draw from is best determined by which order you will speak in. This table will help illustrate my point:

#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>N</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4-5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2-3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0-1</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0-1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2-3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4-5</b>

#=Speaker Number **N**=New Question  
**D** = Discarded Question

This is not meant to be a mathematical formula that every extemper should follow when drawing their questions. This table demonstrates the availability of new and used questions and the best way for a speaker to respond to that availability. So if you are the first speaker you will obviously only draw new questions. As you progress down the speakers list you will have to make tougher choices to make from which set you will select your questions.

The most important strategy is the one that works best for you personally. My strategy did not always work for me and it is safe to say it will not always work for you.

## (E.) Eliminating Questions

It is just as important for an extemporaneous speaker to eliminate the right questions as it is for him or her to draw the right questions. Let's suppose that you have drawn five questions. Now you must lay them out in front of you and decide which one of the five you will choose. Your decision will be much easier if you can eliminate some of the choices immediately. Here are some criteria for eliminating questions:

### **1. Discard a question if you do not have enough evidence to answer it.**

Example: Has New Orleans created enough safety measures to adequately respond to another hurricane?

If your box lacks any information about New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina, or any articles on the progress of the city after the hurricane, then this is not the question for you. Discard it and find a question which you can answer with evidence.

### **2. If possible, avoid *controversial* religious or political topics.**

Example: Should the Park 151 community center be built so close to ground zero?

OR

Example: Should terrorists be given the same rights as United States criminals?

Remember that your judges are not robots. Although logical reason should guide their decision in the round, remember that your judge will have beliefs and opinions of his own.

Controversial religious and political topics can stir a judge's beliefs and opinions so vigorously that it may cost you a finishing place in the round. If there are better questions available to you, avoid speaking on controversial issues.

### **3. Avoid lengthy or wordy questions.**

Example: Has Barack Obama, the President of the United States, taken the correct actions as a president to promote safety and security in the Middle East in the past three years?

If you have trouble reading that to a judge, let alone remembering the question while you are giving a speech, how do you expect the judge to remember it either? Even if you have a myriad of evidence for this question, it would be better to choose a more concise question.

### **4. Discard any out-of-date questions.**

Example: Will the Republicans seize control of the House and Senate in the 2010 Midterm Elections?

Although you will not (or should not) see many out of date questions in a tournament draw, if you do find one, discard it immediately. Some extemp speakers have drawn these questions believing they can make an awesome speech because the event has already occurred. Trust me, a judge will not buy this tactic and some will penalize you for using outdated questions.



## Section III: Constructing Your Speech

### (A.) Extemp Speeches: The Basics

An extemporaneous speech is very different from other types of speeches you will give in other NFL events and in your professional life. When you begin to give speeches in a tournament setting, you will come to realize just how different extemp speaking can be. As such, you will need to know the best ways to construct your extemp speech to win the judge's vote.

### (B.) The Introduction

An introduction is “arguably the most important part of a speech.”<sup>12</sup> This is certainly true for a speaker giving an extemporaneous speech to a panel of judges in a tournament. The introduction, if done well, could set the speaker apart from his or her competitors, but if done wrong, could cost him or her the round. The introduction to an extemporaneous speech should do the following things:

**State the question:** Even though the judge will have the question prior to your speech, in extemporaneous speaking you should always state the question in your introduction.

### **Answer the question definitively:**

After you state your question you should provide the answer to the question. If you do not answer the question immediately, the judge can become lost or confused before you reach the body of your speech.

**Provide a relevant “hook:”**<sup>13</sup> The joke, story, or quote that you use to gain the judge's attention should be relevant to your topic. Do not start off-topic with irrelevant information and do not provide false information to your judge at any point in time.<sup>14</sup> Examples include:

**Irrelevant Hook:** Millions of children in Africa will die today, just as millions of soldiers are dying for our country in Iraq.

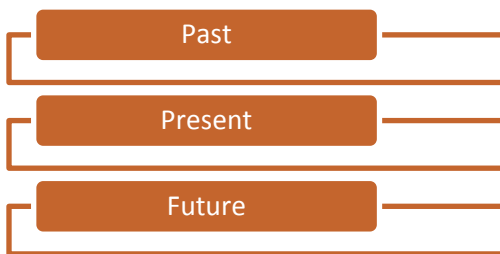
**False Information:** Last week as I talked to my grandfather on his deathbed, the last thing he said to me was to take care of the earth for my future grandson. This is why...<sup>15</sup>

### (C.) The Body: Structure

The body of an extemporaneous speech, though it contains most of your information and will take up most of your speaking time, should have a really basic structure. There are

several ways to structure your speech to present the judge with clear and detailed information which I will diagram below. As you begin digging through your box for evidence, you should think about how you will structure your speech to incorporate the evidence into your analysis. Here are some basic ways to structure the body of your speech:

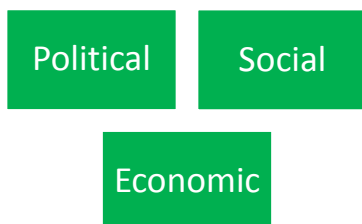
### Chronological Structure



Example: Has NASA substantially provided the United States with exploration and understanding of space?

A question that involves events or actions that took place over an extended period of time can be answered with a chronological structure.

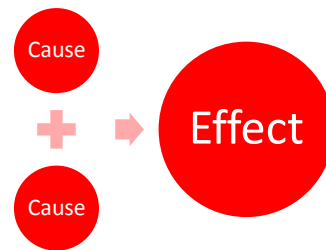
### Topical Structure



Example: Does the United States need to mend its relations with Iran?

For questions of policy which ask about past, present, or future actions topical analysis is a great tool. For the first question, providing three perspectives about the benefits or costs of U.S.-Iran relations sufficiently answers the question.

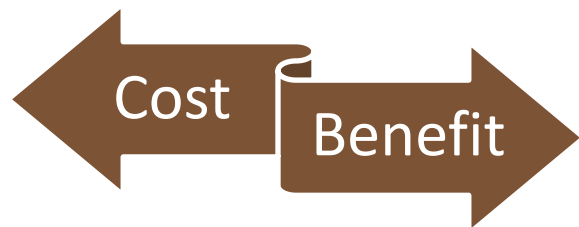
### Cause and Effect Structure



Example: Can the Republicans win in 2012?

Cause and effect analysis is great to use with a “yes” or “no” question. Depending on how much evidence you have you can make a 2, 3, or 4 point speech with any number of causes and effects. Just be sure to watch your time.

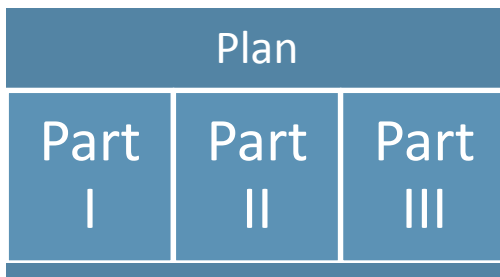
### Cost-Benefit Structure



### Example: Should the United States legalize marijuana?

As we saw with the cause and effect structure, cost-benefit structure is a great way to answer a “yes” or “no” question.

#### Plan or Strategy Structure



Example: How can the U.S. increase jobs?

For “how” and “why” questions, which demand a creative response, a plan or strategy structure for an extemp speech allows the speaker to creatively answer the question. However, it is important to make sure that an answer is well supported by the evidence.

#### (D.) The Body: Specific Points

As you have seen from the part (C), the body of your speech should have 2 to 3 main points. Now we will discuss how to present each point to your judge when giving your speech. Again, even though you will spend the majority of your speech discussing each individual point, the structure for

discussing your main points is very simple:

**Claim:** The claim is the conclusion that you can draw from your research. It is the first thing you will tell the judge and it is important because it lets the judge know *what* is occurring in your structure, i.e. in a chronological structure, your first claim tells the judge what was happening in the past.

Example: The last time a case like this was brought before the Supreme Court, it lost.

**Warrant:** The warrant is the evidence which supports your claim. You will use the specific evidence in your box to provide the warrant for the claims you make during the speech. Warrants directly contribute to a speaker’s credibility so the more evidence you provide along with detailed knowledge of your evidence, the more credible you sound to the judge.<sup>16</sup>

Example: According to an article from the *New York Times* in 2002, the judges voted 5-4 against the plaintiff.

**Impact:** This is the reason *why* your claim is important. Remember that you are persuading the judge in the round, so without an impact to each of your points, the judge might just say, “So what?”

Example: Because this case is so similar to the 2002 case, the Supreme Court is likely to strike it down, causing x to occur.

### **(E.) The Conclusion**

With the majority of your speech completed, a strong finish is necessary to securing the top vote from your judge. There are four important parts of your conclusion:

- 1. Reference the “Hook:”** This is called tying the speech together. Referencing the hook gives a sense of completeness to the speech.
- 2. Restate Your Points:** Briefly reflect on each point you have made in the speech.
- 3. Restate the Question:** Judges prefer that the question be stated in the conclusion. It goes along with the idea that a speech should be complete.
- 4. Restate the Answer:** The final words of your speech should be the answer to the question you have just restated. Extemporaneous speaking is an answer-driven event, so it should be the first and last part of your speech.

## Section IV: Delivering Your Speech

### (A.) Preview

You've reached the final section of this guide, the oral presentation of your speech to a judge. In this section we will cover how to present your speech (movements, speaking tone, eye contact, and posture) how to read your time limits, and how to read your judge and his or her reactions during your speech.

Research, preparation, and delivery are like the three legs of a tripod. If one leg is missing, the camera will not stand. Similarly if you have great research and great preparation, but poor delivery, you can lose the round. Ultimately the judge will decide if you should win, so do not forget to practice giving your speech as well! When practicing your speech, it is important to practice with someone present in the room (actually speak TO a person) so that you may receive feedback.

### (B.) Speaking Posture and Movement

The first indication to a judge about how a speaker will perform in the round is the type of posture and amount of movement a speaker displays before he or she says even one word.<sup>17</sup>

Of course first time speakers will be nervous and could have various conditions (in winter tournaments achy feeling and blocked sinuses are common). However, domestic extemporaneous speakers should observe a few guidelines for delivery as best as possible if they want to impress the judge(s) in the room and win the round. Such guidelines include:

**Stand in Poised Attention:** When giving an extemporaneous speech there are two extremes, the soldier and the slouch.

**The Soldier:** Stands completely rigid, face blank, arms at his or her side and delivers the speech with singular precision.

**The Slouch:** Moves around the room with no purpose and uses large hand gestures to make his or her point. The stance is very loose and lazy.

Neither speaker sounds particularly interesting to listen to because a judge or an audience is tempted to focus more on their posture than their actual speech.

Instead, the best way to stand when presenting your speech is in a relaxed, but poised fashion. Keep your

shoulders straight and your head up, but let your hands relax at your sides and use a wide range of facial expressions to demonstrate your point.

### **Use Conversational Speech Tones:**

Consider again the soldier and the slouch and how each would sound if they gave a speech to you. The soldier would probably drone on and on until you stopped listening to his actual words. Meanwhile, the slouch would be so erratic that you would have a hard time following the line of reason in his or her speech.

You should try to speak in a logical, but conversational tone to sound most persuasive and credible to your judge.<sup>18</sup> Let's look at how the soldier, the slouch, and the conversational speaker would explain the warrant of a point to the judge:

**The Soldier:** "This article is from the New York Times in February 2009. It states that employment rates are at an all-time high. From this we can conclude..."

**The Slouch:** "The in 2009 in February the New York Times showed some statistics about unemployment and those statistics were important because they were high. So that's why..."

### **The Conversational Speaker:**

"Consider the current levels of unemployment: A New York Times article reports on February 19th, 2009 that unemployment rates are at an all-time high. These staggering statistics indicate..."

**Use Limited Motion:** It is perfectly fine to use hand gestures and to take a few steps across the room to indicate that you are discussing a new point of your speech.

However, hand motions should be minimal. Do not bring your hands above your shoulders. Gestures should be used only to emphasize key information. When you do not need hand gestures, place your hands in a relaxed position at your sides with your palms facing your hips.

When you move to transition between points, you should only take two or three steps. DO NOT walk all the way across the room. This behavior is not only distracting but is also creating extra work for your mental faculties.

### **(C.) Dress Code**

When typing this guidebook I was asked by one of my friends why I waited until the end to discuss the dress code. I have chosen to put it here because I wanted the first sections to focus on the research element of extemporaneous speaking. If you as a

reader are just now reading this part before you give your speech to the judge (wearing your skinny jeans and a graphic tee) I am sorry for waiting so long to inform you. Read this part for the next tournament you attend.

What is the proper dress code for giving an extemporaneous speech? It is often easier to tell competitors what *not* to wear. However there are a few formal guidelines that should aid your wardrobe decisions:

**(For Males) Collars at all times:** Shirt selection at the most basic level should have this criterion: *If it does not have a collar, do not wear it.* Does this mean it is okay to wear a Polo shirt? Not necessarily, it means that given the choice between a polo shirt and a Weezer t-shirt, pick the polo.

**(For Females) The “B” Rule:** Ladies pardon me for sounding crude, but in high school I learned that female competitors should follow the “B Rule” (this rule was issued by a female coach). A judge should never see your boobs, bra, or belly-button. By this I mean that your blouse (again my male ignorance is showing) or whatever type of top you choose to wear should be modest and professional.

**Skirts:** I hope this does not apply to males; ladies, in line with the “B Rule”

make sure that skirts are professional and appropriate. Believe me, female judges can be the harshest critics when it comes to skirt choice. Though you should be judged on your speech alone, improper skirt choice can lose you a round.

**(For Both) Pants, Belts, and Shoes:** Professional is the key word for fashion in extemporaneous speaking. Pants should be at the appropriate height (this does not mean around your butt) and belts and shoes should be the appropriate colors, which are black, brown, and grey (no sparkles, graphic art, or tassels please).

**Hairstyles:** For men and women with long hair, the main rule is that you should secure it and keep it away from your face. As a judge the “hair flip” from both guy and girl competitors annoyed me more than any other mannerism when they spoke. Your hair should not inhibit your speech.

### **(D.) Time Signals**

When speaking in the round it is important to also be aware of the time signals given to you by the judge or time keeper. As stated earlier, it is your right to have time signals given to you during the round. It is also to your advantage to use those time signals because it allows you to evaluate when

you should speed up or slow-down in the round to fit within the 4-7 minute time window. There are three important points to consider about the use of time signals:

**1. Time Signals Can Count Up or Down:** When you make a request for time signals in the round the time-keeper or judge may ask you if you would like time to be counted up or down. If they do not ask, it is still your right to choose how your time signals are given.

If you choose to have your time signals counted up the first indication given to you by the judge or time keeper will be when you have spoken for 1 minute. Similarly if you choose to have your time counted down, the first signal you will see is when you have 6 minutes remaining.

**2. Time Signals Can Be Physical or Auditory:** You may also request to either see your time signals by a show of hand from your judge or time-keeper or you may request to have them verbally called out during your speech.

I do not recommend using verbal time signals for two reasons: 1) Because judges might not honor them in the round, even if the rules allow for it and, 2) Because audible time signals

can distract both the speaker and the judge.

**3. Do Not Rely on Time Signals:** If you are constantly looking at the time keeper to judge how many minutes you have left (or at your timing device) it is really distracting to the judge. Furthermore, time keepers or judges might not give you accurate time signals in the round. Some judges forget and some time keepers will mess up and not let the speaker know.

You should constantly practice your speech at home with your own time to get a feel for how long you should be speaking. The less you have to rely on time signals, the better you sound to your judge during the extemp round.

### (E.) Your Judges

This should really be its own section. Judging has become such a complicated topic for extemporaneous speaking that the limited coverage of it here seems unfair. In any given round, including the National tournament, you may speak to anyone from a high school-educated laborer to a professor of communication at a prestigious college.<sup>19</sup> A key question to consider is this: Who really decides the round? Is it the speaker or the judge?



While a good speaker can create and deliver a speech that is far superior to his other opponents, a judge can still rank the speaker last in the round if he or she so chooses. So what can an extemper who wants to win the tournament do?

### (F.) Strengthening Your Speech

The first solution to avoiding the subjectivity of a judge is to minimize the judge's beliefs and opinions on a question and strengthen objectivity. Consider this question:

“Has Congress sufficiently aided the ‘First-Responders’ to the 9-11 World Trade Center Collapse?”

Now imagine that your judge, without your knowledge, was in fact a first responder or had a family member or friend who was a first responder. They *might* have an opinion about the answer to that question already set in their mind. So how should you go about persuading them?

**Present Facts:** In order to demonstrate your credibility and to construct a logical argument, you need to present objective facts about the topic. Explain what has been done so far and what needs to be done for first responders in the future.

**Avoid “Expert” Language:** If your judge disagrees with your answer, one “obviously” or “clearly” in your speech could cost you the round. Avoid making what sounds like an expert opinion in your speech. If your judge already agrees with you, then there should be no reason to have to use expert language anyway.

**Always Acknowledge the Opposing Viewpoint:** Whether the judge does or does not agree with you, maintaining objectivity and credibility requires that you present the opposing viewpoint to the answer you have provided. If you have said that Congress did NOT sufficiently aide first responders, be sure to point out why some people believe that Congress DID do so.

### (G.) Reading Your Judges

Judges are not robots. They have different backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs that influence their decisions just a little bit differently for each speaker. As stated earlier, one approach to judge subjectivity is to reduce the amount of subjectivity by presenting a strongly objective speech. However, others emphasize the practice of adapting to the characteristics of the judge when giving a speech. This type of mindset

can be called “Reading (and adapting) Your Judge.” Richard Paine, one of the leading figures of this mindset stresses the importance for debate coaches to prepare students to adapt to judges and judging factors that can influence the round.<sup>20</sup>

Although there are endless amounts of minute factors that will contribute to a judge’s decision in the round, there are several macrocosmic factors that good extempers should be aware of when giving a speech.

### **(H.) Visual Cues: Race and Gender**

**Race:** Unfortunately, racial issues still permeate society today and many times domestic extemporaneous topics will discuss racially charged issues. For example, how should an extemper handle a question of affirmative action if a non-white male or female is judging the speaker? Racial sensitivity is crucial, just as gender neutrality is key, in extemp rounds.

**Gender:** Depending on the gender of your judge you may need to change the perspective of your speech. For example, if your speech talks about the hardships of a family with a son at war in Iraq, how persuasive will you sound to a female judge who does not yet

have kids? Speeches in general should be gender neutral. Avoid overuse of “he” or “man” or calling objects “her” or “she” because this type of language can offend both male and female judges.

### **(I.) Non-Visual Cues: Income Level, Religious and Political Affiliation**

Non visual cues are extremely hard for an extemporaneous speaker to distinguish because, as the title implies, they are not readily known to the speaker at first sight. However, based upon a judge’s reactions during the introduction of your speech and the questions he or she will ask you afterward, you can provide an adaptive response to your speech.

**Income Level:** Any economic question an extemper will draw can immediately become controversial based on the income level of the judge. Consider for example, how a question about unemployment will sound to a judge who has been laid off from his or her job or has a family member or friend in the same situation?

**Religious Affiliation:** At a local tournament you should consider the religious majority in your city, state, or region. Primarily you will be speaking to a Christian audience, so if you

happen to draw a question about religion, make sure you can adapt your speech in the round if the judge seems offended.

**Political Affiliation:** Likewise, based on the political affiliation, make sure you adapt your speech away from partisanship during the round if you judge is giving you a negative reaction. Speaking from one end of the political spectrum can be of great benefit to you or great harm based on the judge's political affiliation.

### **(J.) Objective Speeches or Reading Your Judge? Which to Prefer**

When presenting your speech to a judge which strategy should you prefer, adaption during the round, or strong objectivity when writing your speech before the round begins?

I believe the best strategy is to incorporate both as much as possible. When I was giving a speech at the NFL National Tournament in 2008 I drew a question about U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq. When I handed my question to the judge, a female in her mid-40's I noticed that she sighed and patted her chest (Big clue!).

Did I change the evidence in my speech or the points I was making? No. But I did change my intro from a bland

analysis of the War in Iraq thus far to a heartfelt and impassioned tribute to the soldiers who had fought and died for what they believed in during the war? Absolutely. When I received 1<sup>st</sup> in the round, I knew I had to tip my hat to reading the judge, but I had still maintained objectivity throughout the body of my speech.

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## References

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- <sup>4</sup> Klingler, E. C. (n.d.) *Speaking like a gator: A guide to individual events at the University of Florida*. Retrieved from: <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/3445573/Guide-to-Extemporaneous-Speaking>
- <sup>5</sup> National Forensic League (n.d.) *Extemporaneous speaking: Extemporaneous speaking rules*, 15 Retrieved from: [NFLExtempRules.doc](#) on nflonline.org.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid (35-36).
- <sup>7</sup> Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association (2010). *Speech, Debate, and One Act Play Guidelines*. Retrieved from: [http://www.ossaa.com/Portals/0/docs/OSSAA%20Forms/Speech/SP\\_1011\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.ossaa.com/Portals/0/docs/OSSAA%20Forms/Speech/SP_1011_Manual.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid (15)
- <sup>9</sup> Although this number will change at Nationals and Districts tournaments, a five question draw is the number determined by the OSSAA in their 2010-11 Speech manual. See Reference 7 for details.
- <sup>10</sup> Zarefsky, D. (1976) Presented at the Western Speech Communication Association Convention: *Criteria for Evaluating a Non-Policy Argument*. (p. 9-16).
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- <sup>13</sup> University of North Carolina Writing Workshop (n.d.) *Speeches* [PDF format]. Retrieved from: [http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts\\_pdf/speeches.pdf](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts_pdf/speeches.pdf)
- <sup>14</sup> Schmidt, R. N. (1959). Common Speech Practices That Annoy Audiences. *Today's Speech*, 7(2), 7-12.
- <sup>15</sup> If the second example was really a true story, the introduction of a 4-7 minute extemp speech is not the place to tell it. Stories like this look false even if they are true, and can lose you the round.
- <sup>16</sup> Joraanstad, P. S. (1989). Strategies to Enhance the Use of Documentation in Extemporaneous Speaking. *North Dakota Journal of Speech & Theatre*, 2(1), 55-57.

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