



Impromptu Speaking

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## About the Tutorial

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Impromptu speaking is a mode of speech, generally modelled around a speech and debate event, where participants get a time-frame of eight minutes to deliver a speech on a given topic, with a characteristically short time of preparation, ranging between one and three minutes.

Primarily started as a technique to evaluate an individual's aptitude, it has since then moved on to be applied in day-to-day conversations, social meetings, official conferences, formal gatherings, etc.

The tutorial aims to train the learners the tips and techniques of speaking impromptu on stage. The strategies help the speaker to generate ideas in an extremely small frame of time and articulate the ideas well before an audience.

## Audience

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This tutorial is designed to help working professionals get a better understanding of the importance of holding their own in any conversation, by bringing up relevant and interesting content into the discussion in a prompt manner.

Impromptu speaking and public speaking are vital for survival in the corporate sector, public sector, and in several other professions.

## Prerequisites

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There is no prerequisite for this tutorial. The learner must be passionate about public speaking. However, there is no barrier of language or ethnicity for this tutorial.

## Disclaimer & Copyright

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# 1. Impromptu Speaking - Introduction

An impromptu speech, by definition, is the one that a speaker delivers without any prior preparation on the topic. Impromptu, itself, means “doing something without preparation”.

In declamation contests, a random topic is fired at the speaker on the spot, and the speaker gets just a few seconds to think over the topic. In the span of these few seconds, the speaker is expected to come up with relevant content to speak on the topic, for a specified duration. In group discussions too, speakers are given a topic to discuss and are required to come up with their content at the spur of the moment. In debates, the speech is often regulated by the arguments of the opponent.

Such speeches, where the speaker has to be on his/her toes at all times while responding quickly to a topic, is called “**Impromptu Speech**”. The interviews of politicians, the US presidential debate, or even the panel discussions of TV channels are all examples of impromptu speaking. Interestingly, personal interviews also need thinking at the spur of the moment, yet we generally don’t place it under the realm of impromptu speech. The reason behind this is the questions in interviews are more or less focused around the resume of the candidate, who gets a lot of time to prepare the answers of these expected questions beforehand.

In 2008, National Forensics Association (NFA) in USA introduced to the world a new form of impromptu speaking for competitions; they called it the “**Editorial Impromptu**”. A short editorial, consisting of around 3-5 paragraphs, is provided to the speakers who are required to read and develop their opinion on it in nine minutes, followed by five minutes of speaking. Limited number of notes is allowed to the speakers for reference purpose.

Impromptu speaking has become a norm in today’s world and is used in many instances for selection into B-schools and for job placements. It’s become highly important for people to master impromptu speaking to climb the rungs of the corporate ladder.

## 2. Significance of Impromptu Speaking

Speech is one of the fundamental qualities of human beings. Without speech, language would not have evolved, just as without different languages, different cultures would not have risen and perhaps, the human civilization would have never got its shape. **Communicating is as integral a part** of our lives, as is breathing, eating food and sleeping. Not a day generally passes without us speaking to our friends, family, and colleagues. If we come across such a day, we feel isolated.

But how many times in our daily life, do we actually think whether our words have any significance? In other words, how many times do we recollect what we said to the other person, and try to assess whether our words really added any value to the listener? Or how many times do we think we have made an impact on the listener through our words?

These thoughts don't cross our mind very often, but when they do, we find ourselves unable to get our speech right. This assumes a bigger problem when we join the corporate circle and are asked to speak impromptu. We don't get ideas on a topic and **fail to make a good impression** on others.



### Myths of Impromptu Speaking

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Impromptu speaking, as a challenge, is not limited only to the academically-backward. On the contrary, it has been found that majority of the literate population are found wanting in this area.

Given a topic, we find ourselves with no option other than to stare at the roof, indicating that we are thinking of the topic when the truth is that our mind is devoid of any idea at that moment whatsoever.

Declamation contests, debates, and group discussions are some situations where we fail to come up with instant ideas on a topic. Due to this issue, most of us fail to make a mark on the panelists and hence, our chances of getting selected to a B-school or landing a job of our choice becomes difficult. Even though we are equipped with adequate technical knowledge, we fail to grab the opportunity because during the group discussion, debate or declamation contests, we fail to put appropriate words to our thoughts in short notice.

## Speaking in Front of an Audience

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What was the last time you had gone up to the podium to speak on a topic and you suffered from a choked throat, sweating forehead, and palpitating heart? If you have suffered this at least once in the last few months, then you need to know that it is not rare for even veteran speakers to face a black-out, when they are asked to speak impromptu on a topic for mere 2 minutes.

## Identifying Areas of Improvement

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Someone who uses too many slogans and catchy statements is not certainly a good speaker. If the audience has nothing – like a word, a phrase or personal quote – to remember at the end of the speech, then the speaker has failed. Hence, it is imperative that a speaker allows the audience **to return with some takeaway** from the speech. If that happens, then the speech – irrespective of the vocabulary, idioms, and proverbs – will be successful.

To help a person speak, we encourage him or her to speak in front of a crowd and shed their glossophobia. That, indeed, helps them to get rid of their stage-fright. But dropping this fear is not enough to make someone a great speaker. A speaker may have style, elegance and panache with delivery, but if the content is weak, then the audience won't have any key takeaway. If your listeners don't have anything to take back from your speech, then your minutes of speech have been futile. Hence, the content of your speech is really vital and has to be of good quality.

# 3. General Conversations

The topics that generally appear in group discussions, interviews, declamation contests, and panel discussions are most-often related to current affairs, social issues, or topics of global concern. However, of late, it has also been observed that the topics in essay-writing contests and article-writing rounds of B-schools' selection process are centered on abstract topics that set free the imagination of the applicants.

In one of the XAT exams, the entrance exam conducted by the premier institute, Xavier Labor Relations Institute, the topic of essay revolved around Beauty. In 1996, the topic of essay round in XAT was "**There Is No Right Way of Doing a Wrong Thing**". In such cases, the writer is free to imagine situations, come up with ideas from diverse spheres of life, and be creative with the subject matter.

## The Non-abstract Topic Dilemma

While abstract topics are a favorite for recruiters who are interviewing candidates for operations-related jobs, panelists recruiting for managerial positions tend to stress on non-abstract, serious topics. The topics generally revolve around social, environmental, political issues, in which the candidate is expected to back up his statements with facts and figures. The discussion doesn't have much scope for creative thoughts, unless of course it's a hypothetical scenario.

In group discussions, it is normally observed that topics are a mix and match of serious and abstract topics. The speakers can be given any topic and the conclusion always does not matter. However, in business discussions, the aim is to **always reach a conclusion**.



## Addressing the Issue

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To cover these two areas, we will bifurcate our discussion and this tutorial will first touch upon the preparation for serious or non-abstract topics. The other half will be devoted to abstract topics. Please note that the techniques for abstract topics and non-abstract topics are sometimes interchangeable. There is **no hard and fast rule** to adhere to a single technique for each of the two different types of topics. The task at hand is to generate ideas and to stand out of the crowd when faced with a topic.

It is important to note that there can be many other classifications of topics as well. However, for the sake of simplicity and for covering all types of topics under minimum number of umbrellas, we will discuss only two types of topics – viz. non-abstract and abstract.

## 4. Non-abstract Conversation

The non-abstract topics generally comprise of geo-political issues, educational or environmental concern, or business information. These topics require the speaker to have knowledge on current affairs, and facts and figures pertaining to recent incidents happening in the world, etc. While speaking on a non-abstract topic, speakers don't have the luxury of digressing from the focal point, and have to think only on the lines of the words mentioned in the topic.

For example, if we are given a topic, "**The menace of terrorism**", the speaker has to stick to the theme of terrorism. He/she cannot digress from the topic and think of things not related to it. This is something unique about non-abstract topics. The speaker will have to think about the way terrorism originated, or the way it impacts our society. The speaker has to delve deeper into various facets of the phenomenon called 'terrorism'.

### Points to Consider

One important thing about non-abstract topics is that the speaker has to come to a conclusion by the end of the speech. Open-ended conclusions left for the public to understand are full of risks. If the speaker does not take a stand at the end of speech, it seems as if the speaker were like a ship without a rudder. Without a firm stand, **the speech goes astray** and the audience has no key takeaway from the speech. As we had already discussed in the one of the last chapters that a key takeaway is vital for a speech to be successful.

### Consider Another Example

In the topic, "The role of US in world economy", the speaker is required to think only of how the US impacts the economy of the world. It is not advisable to rope in other countries and talk about their influence in the world's flow of cash and goods. At the end, the speaker is expected to come up with a conclusion, and end with a brief summary of what all he/she had spoken.

### A few examples of non-abstract topics are as follows:

- The role of media in society.
- The impact of social networking on the youth of the country.
- The terrorist attacks of Paris.
- The rise of democracy in Africa.
- Which is better – democracy or dictatorship?
- Is United Nations capable of bringing up a good world order?

Non-abstract topics are favorites in panel discussions, debates, and group discussions. Please note that debates rarely have abstract topics. In the next chapter, we will find out how debates can be fought even on abstract topics.

# 5. Abstract Conversation

Abstract conversation involves discussing topics that do not restrict the speaker to think in a particular direction. The speaker is free to fly in any direction with his thoughts. E.g. 'Black'.

For a topic like 'Black', the average speaker might stand there wondering about the beautiful color which has no shades, no hue and yet, is elegant. He might also speak about 'black' as a color, what it represents in his life and where all does he/she see that color. But that's it.

**This is a major problem with the speakers** who can't think of innovative ideas on abstract topics: they adhere to the literal meaning and don't think out of the box. They cling to what the topic conveys, in general.

As this topic "**black**" has nothing to do with anything of geo-political concern or social or environmental concern, instead of interpreting it as just an ordinary color, the truly engaging speaker will transform it into something serious as 'the apartheid'. The speaker can also think of the space - its void and black color. In other words, the speaker gets the license to interpret the given topic any way he wants.

## Innovation in Thinking

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**One unique feature** about the abstract topics is that they give the speaker the freedom to think and imagine. The speaker can shape and mold the topic in any way he/she wants. It's the widening of thoughts that's the most important here.

Most often than not, abstract topics appear in the form of famous quotes or idioms or proverbs. "You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink" is a proverb and is an abstract topic.

This topic is not related to geo-politics, education, business, society or environment in particular. However, it can be shaped into a topic on any of these. An average speaker will just talk about what the proverb means and how forcing someone to do something cannot help the person. Someone may even cite the example of criminals, whose character doesn't change much even after spending years of self-introspection in prison.

## Can't We Think of Something Innovative?

Can't we think of endless number of campaigns Indian freedom fighters did to threaten the British, to no avail? Can't we think of the engineering students in most parts of the country who are forced by their families to study engineering, but they end up learning nothing because science does not interest them?

These topics don't need a concrete conclusion, unless it is a topic for debate. For topics like 'Black', the speaker needs to focus on ideas, rather than shaping the opinion of the listeners. The **ending of the speech can be open ended** as the aim is not to have a key takeaway, but to delve deeper into various facets of the topic.

## Application of Abstract Topics

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Abstract topics are a must for essay writing contests. Moreover, these days even the group discussion for campus placements and B-school selection rounds happen around abstract topics. Debates can be fought around abstract topics too. For instance, consider a topic '**Does an early bird always catch the worm?**' The debaters can speak at length on the topic.

Participants can talk about how entrepreneurs like Mark Zuckerberg or Bill Gates started early in their life and got successful, and how that helped them grab opportunities in business. Another side to the debate could be the cases of Sanjeev Bhikchandani or Boman Irani, who started a bit late in their careers, but still managed to achieve acclaim in their respective professional fields.

In this world that respects experiment over theory, it's important to prove the practicality of this tool. Let me see an example. Suppose the topic given to us is 'Black'. First, define the topic in whatever way it is convenient to you. For a person from science background, he/she will begin with a scientific definition of the term, which has to be comprehensible to a layman.

***"Black, the color which absorbs all the wavelengths of the universe, is one color that surrounds us in all forms."***

This sets the context of the speech. Now, move to each parameter slowly with proper transitions. Let me show you how the content of the speech will develop hereafter.

**A few examples of abstract topics are as follows:**

- Beauty is only skin deep.
- Don't judge a book by its cover.
- Red and blue.
- United we stand, divided we fall.
- Strike the iron while it is hot.

## 6. POPBEANS Technique

One of the best ways to deal with abstract topics in a confident manner is by adopting a technique, "POPBEANS". Each of these letters gives you a different field to pursue your discussion on. POPBEANS stands for:

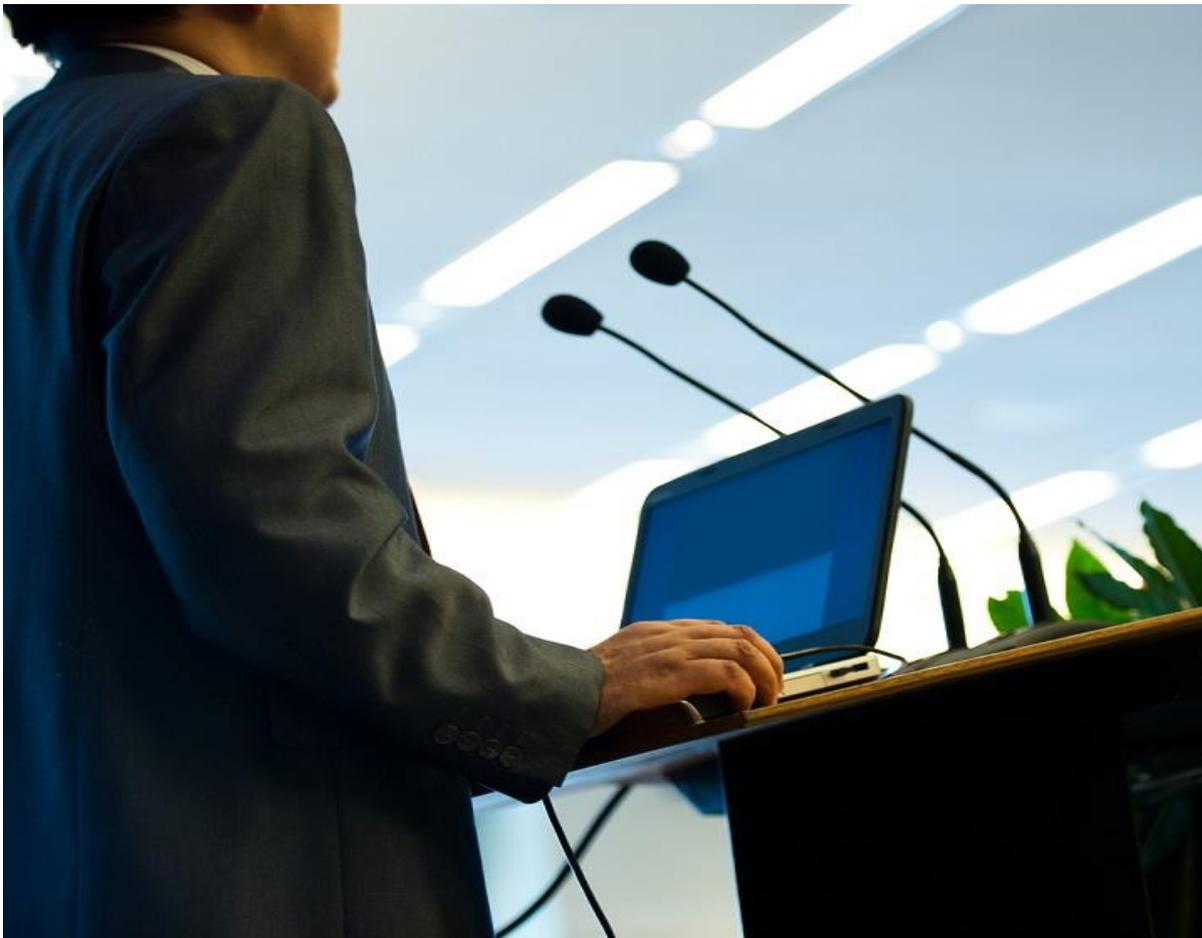
- **P:** Person
- **O:** Objects
- **P:** Places
- **B:** Beliefs
- **E:** Events
- **A:** Actions
- **N:** Nature
- **S:** Scientific

Each letter will help you form a section of your speech, which will help you build content for around 5 minutes and also will help you expand the horizons of your thoughts with regard to the topic.

## 7. Applying POPBEANS: P for Person

Think of the people who are associated with the topic. Try to think of people who have spoken about the topic at some point in their life, or if the topic has been a part of their lives in any manner. You can relate people like Wright Brothers to sky, to flight, to courage, to science, to dogged determination, etc.

Moreover, you can relate any suitable person to the subject of the speech. For example, you can associate Mother Teresa to compassion, resolve, charity, cultural exchange, women power, etc. You can relate Nelson Mandela to qualities like peace, patience, endurance, and forgiveness.



**The speaker needs to ensure** that the examples of the people he is using to associate positive qualities - like compassion, friendship, etc. with are those of who are considered in good light around the world. Similarly, for topics having negative connotation, the examples must be of people who are seen in negative light by the masses. It will be futile to talk on charity by giving example of Hitler or to talk of ethics by giving example of Satyam Company.

In our example, the topic is 'black'. Just think for a moment who you can relate this color to?

The first few examples that must have crossed your mind must have been Nelson Mandela or Martin Luther King Jr. However, one should not limit one's ideas only to specific personalities. Think of apartheid as an epidemic. Think of how blacks had been discriminated against around the globe.

Even India has not been left untouched by this menace. The British ruled over us and despised us for our skin tone. Think of how Jesse Owens stood up as an achiever in the Olympics, even though he was a black. Did Obama not face a bit of resistance when he was a presidential candidate for the first time? Think of all the facets and all the people and their struggles or chronicles of their life, which is related to the color 'black'. This will help you generate more ideas.

**Let's take a look at a sample script:**

When I think of black, the first thing that strikes my mind is the incessant torture and the subsequent struggle that was destined for the blacks of this world. People like Nelson Mandela, who fought against apartheid and Martin Luther King Jr., who stood up as the hero of the blacks show that color is not a deciding factor for one's intellect, progress, and status in the society.

Look at Obama, the President of the US. Do you think he faced no resistance from fanatics? He did, yet he stood up for what is right and eventually we have a black President running the nation that once oppressed blacks.

## 8. Applying POPBEANS: O for Object

In this section, your task as a speaker is to think of all objects that are related to the subject of your speech. It can be any object – ranging from objects on the earth to objects in the outer space; the entire universe is open for your exploration. Don't limit yourself to physical and tangible objects around you. Even dreams and hypothetical things can be spoken about.

Things of fantasy can be discussed, provided that the audience must be able to understand the object. There is no point confusing people with description of ethereal things. Take a look around you and try to look out for connections between those objects and the subject of your speech.

### **Divide this section into two parts:**

- **Living things:** Think of the living objects that relate to the subject of your speech. Think of the beauty and value they add to the world and to your life. In our example, we have 'black' as the topic. You can talk of panthers, which stand for awe and flexibility. Or you can even talk about dark-colored flowers that have their own beauty.
- **Non-living objects:** 'Black' as a color is seen in the coal mines and even in the dark sky. From the underground to the sky overhead, everything has something black in it. The night is itself dark which adds mystery and an enigma to the black color.



**Let's look at a script for this section:**

"Black also reminds me of the immense power it holds. I think of black holes that govern the functioning of the universe. The color of void space is also black. This color not only represents infinity, but also shows how the most beautiful things like stars and galaxies look radiant with this color in the background.

Look beneath your feet, the caves and mines are dark. Black engulfs the underworld. Raise your head high and look at the sky. The stars shine the brightest against the dark backdrop of the night sky. The night, which has its own awe and enigma, adds mystery due to the black color.

The panthers in the forest, the black rose blossoming in the shrubs and the black coal that powers our civilization add an altogether different charm to this elegant color."

## 9. Applying POPBEANS: P for Places

In this section, the speaker is supposed to think of various places or locations on the earth that you can relate to the subject of your speech. The places need not be city names or country names, but locations in general; like streets, forests, hotels, schools, etc. Nevertheless, **it is always better to come up with names** of a particular city or country because that makes the content of the speech more vivid.

Talking about something special about the places adds value to the content of the speech. Try to bring out the splendor or sorrow of these places. That will help you empathize with many in the audience and will bring some facts in the speech, which is a vital element for any good speech.

Let's continue with the example, '**black**'. Which places do you find black color in common? Black color will manifest wherever there is darkness, and darkness is mostly found in rural places, graveyard, and forests. Wherever loneliness exists, black or darkness can be found. Think on these lines and frame the content emphasizing about these places.

### **Let's take a look at this sample speech:**

Black does not always beautify things. The night scene of the dark Amazon forest, which is ventured by animals like the anaconda and the jaguar, is enough to bring anyone's heart in the mouth. But darkness does not manifest always in natural form. Some of them are man-made as well.

The picture of dark streets and cities of Hiroshima after the nuclear bombings depict the grim face of human technological advancements. Similarly, the darkness spelt by the toxic gas spewed out of a chemical plant in Bhopal, India reminds us of the massacres done by human error. **Believe it or not**, but the darkness of a graveyard is enough to freak anyone out.

That darkness is much more terrifying than any darkness in the world. Darkness also brings to my mind the situation in most of our villages, which appear no different from these graveyards. Lack of lighting facilities and inadequate electrification by the government is responsible for the looming darkness in most of the rural parts of our country.

# 10. Applying POPBEANS: B for Beliefs

Beliefs are people's perceptions, opinion, or faith. It is something in which some people believe without asking for evidence or logic. Beliefs vary from person to person, from culture to culture, and from nation to nation. While speaking on beliefs, as a speaker, please make it a point not to hurt the sentiments of the audience.

For these reasons, it will be a detriment for your speech if you make fun of one culture in India, because you never know who in the audience may get offended. That will not add any value to the speech but it will surely make you a bad speaker.

In this section, we can talk about how the subject of our speech is associated to our beliefs and faith even to our religion. E.g. for beauty, we can talk about how our scriptures or philosophers have never associated outer facial beauty with actual inner beauty of mind. "Beauty is only skin deep" or "Don't judge a book by its cover" are two proverbs you can talk of. In our example, we have 'black' as the topic.

Think of the ways in which black is associated to our faith and beliefs. In Indian culture, for instance, black is associated with evil. Black mark is used to ward off evil in Indian culture. On the other hand, black might be a good and revered color in other cultures like Japan where black is associated with beauty. In almost all cultures, black is the symbol of gloom and sadness. Almost all cultures have the habit of depicting demons in black, which compels us to wonder how this common trend spread across all cultures far and wide since the ancient past.

## **Let us take a look at a sample for our topic 'black'.**

Black has been an integral part of our cultures since ages. Its usage can be found in scriptures to even tantric texts. The common attitude of humans to the color black is that of horror, gloom, and sometimes, even shame. 'Black spot' is commonly used as a symbol of embarrassment and stigma in our society. According to popular folklore of India, applying black ash on someone's face is equivalent to the extreme humiliation one can face.

Look in the scriptures, black is perhaps the favorite color of evil. Demons are shown in black, faces of demons are placed outside Indian homes in many cultures with the intention of warding off evil spirits and dark forces. But there is another angle to this as well. In Japan, some women until nineteenth century used to dye their teeth black because it was popularly believed that black teeth would enhance their beauty.

In Chinese culture, black is associated with water, north direction, and winter. Have you ever known that in rural areas of countries like Greece, Italy, Spain, Mexico, and Portugal, widows are condemned to wear black for the rest of their lives? Thai people consider black as a sign of bad luck.



Go around the world and you will find black to be the uniform color for mourning, particularly in western cultures. However, that **does not make black a totally negative color**. Most people wear black in formal occasions. In Feng Shui, black is associated with water, money, income, wealth, prosperity, success in career and stability. We can read text clearly because it's in black; a sharp contrast in the white of paper or screen.

In business conferences or in high profile parties, black is the favorite color of formal attire. In some cultures, some priests also wear black. Many idols of Hindu deities are made of black stone. In all, black is a color that is deeply rooted in our traditions and our beliefs and faith have an undeniable bond with the color black."

# 11. Applying POPBEANS: E for Events

In this section, think of past incidents, festivals, or important occasions that have happened or are upcoming in our society. Try to form a connection between the events and the subject of your speech. As a speaker, think of how the subject plays a crucial role in some events around the globe.

For example, if the topic is 'light', then we can cite the example of the festival Diwali, where light is the center of the entire celebration. Similarly, we can also talk of some gruesome incidents of the past related to our subject.

However, it is of utmost importance that **we don't target any community** or faction with our description of the event. For example, a speaker can talk at length about the attack on World Trade Centre in the US. However, the speaker should not resort to maligning any religion or country in his/her speech. One can relate any incident to the subject, provided the association of the subject with the event makes sense.

## **Let's take a look at the sample script on "black" for this section:**

Our association with black can also be seen in events around the globe. The black color is also used to commemorate some sad events of history. For instance, '**Black Death**' is a term used for the incidence of plague. This disease killed more people than World War II. One can imagine the influence of black color in our traditions that we named this one of the worst crises of human history with the color 'black'.

'**Black Monday**' is a term used to refer to certain events, which occurred or occur on a Monday. In finance, Black Monday refers to the day when stock markets crashed around the world. This way, black is a color that reflects gloom in the economy and in the lives of people. '**Black Day**' is a term used for a day when something fateful or unexpectedly sad happened with someone. 'Black Swan events' is a metaphor for those events that come as a surprise and has a significant impact, but is often rationalized after the fact with the benefit of hindsight.

Thinking on separate lines, black is considered as ignorance in Indian culture and hence, the festival of Diwali is celebrated with a lot of firework and lamps. The intention in this festival is to cast away darkness and hence, ignorance and give way to light, which is a symbol of wisdom, good and enlightenment.

This way, you can take the subject and associate it with various events that happen around the globe. This will make your speech stand out from the rest of the crowd as well.

## 12. Applying POPBEANS: A for Actions

This can be a tricky section. It is always possible to think of an action related to the subject of our speech. In this section, however, you can talk of people's perceptions and attitudes or reactions in general to the subject of your speech. As a speaker, you can talk of love, affection or even repulsion and fear for a topic like 'pets'. You can talk of how the subject of the speech conveys different attitudes or reactions of people.

For example, '**black out**' can mean loss of light and also shock. 'He suffered a black-out on learning about his best friend's tragic death.' This way, we have used the color 'black' as a means to convey an emotion. The sentence '**The earth was red after the war**', conveys acts of bloodshed and war through the usage of the color red. There are multiple ways by which you can convey actions, reactions, perceptions, and attitudes using the subject of your speech. This is one section where we can bring in metaphors and idioms as well.

### **Let's take a look at a sample script using the topic 'black'.**

If we talk of psychology, black conveys clarity with no nuances. It also communicates elegance, sophistication, and unflinching excellence. People also react differently with the color black as compared to other colors. Black, to some people, implies weight. Many people consider a black box to be heavier than a white box, even if they weigh the same.

People also detest burying a dead person in black. It is a popular belief that a woman buried wearing black colored dress will return to haunt the family. If we talk of black comedy, it means creating comedy out of tragic events, which is sometimes not found appropriate by many people. People also call a person as '**black sheep**', if that person is of a bad character in an otherwise respectable group.

Aztecs considered black as a symbol of war and used it signify battle. Black is often equated to honor and dignity as well. In martial arts, black is the highest color of the belt and signifies expertise. On the other hand, a person voting against someone furtively to keep another person from joining the club, it is called '**blackballing**'.

People also use the word 'blackmail' to denote the act of demanding payment or action by the means of threat. Black money is used by people to denote money earned through illegal means and hence, is used by people to throw allegations at others. Thus, black most often denotes some negative perception or action.

## 13. Applying POPBEANS: N for Nature

This is one of the most interesting sections, and one section where you will never fall short of ideas as a speaker. In this section, the speaker has to just look around himself/herself and ideas will come running incessantly to him/her. When we talk of nature, we can basically, talk of anything. **Please don't confuse it with 'objects' section.**

In the 'Objects' section, we discussed about tangible and non-physical objects that are related to the subject of our speech. But in this section, we have to think of how nature is associated to the subject of our speech and what message is conveyed by nature through that association.

**For example,** for a topic like 'water', one can talk about how water is the elixir of life and why nature has kept water on earth in limited quantity. Nature wants to teach us to respect resources and to avoid wastage for our own survival.



In our topic 'black', we can think of the ways natural elements manifest themselves in black. Coal mines signify energy and power, and they are in black color. Black sky represents infinity. The speaker can even think of black holes that can signify power. The night is dark to signify the change of times and the cycle of life, as night is followed by morning, only to be followed again by night. This way, a speaker can think lots more about the color black by using examples from nature.

**Let's take a look at a sample for this section:**

If you look at nature, black symbolizes joy, fear, and mystery at the same time. While black clouds bring the delight of rainfall, the dark night instills fear of the unknown. Dark caves on the other hand inspire mystery and excitement. Black holes can signify infinite power and the ability to absorb everything in the universe.

This way, black signifies an indomitable force and hence, is also considered to be a color of authority by psychologists. Black is one color that contains all wavelengths of light and can absorb all colors. This way, black becomes the assimilation of all radiations and energy in the universe. **Look at the beautiful game of nature.** How a dark night is followed by a bright morning only to be followed by night again. This shows the cycle of life and teaches us that nothing is permanent.

The coal, which we ignite in rural homes and in powerhouses, provides electricity to our homes and hence, lightens up our surroundings. It is amazing to notice how something dark can also give rise to brilliance and radiation. This shows the cosmic interplay of different elements of nature and shows how one entity can be converted into something new and beautiful. **Black is prevalent in nature in diverse forms** and through each form, the nature teaches us something important, which we need to imbibe for the benefit of humanity.

## 14. Applying POPBEANS: S for Science

This is a boon for science graduates, and perhaps, a difficult section for those from non-science background. As a speaker, think of all scientific facts or knowledge that relates to the subject of your speech. There will be a lot of scientific content that can relate to the subject, but for this section, you have to read a lot. Read journals, magazines, and blogs to update your knowledge of scientific data related to the subject of speech.

For example, if we talk of sound, we can talk of it as waves travelling in the air. We can talk of the plight of those who cannot hear and discuss the factors that lead to deafness. If we have 'light' as topic, we can talk of it as being a wave and a radiation. Innovative speakers, at times, also talk about the dual nature of light as a wave and a particle, and relate it to the two-faced nature of people in the world. That shows creativity and fetches bonus points from evaluators.

**Think about the topic we have at hand.** 'Black' is not just a color, it has too many scientific reasons for its existence. It is actually the combination of all colors in the universe. It manifests itself in many forms and in many entities. Yet, it is at the center of an age-old controversy. Debaters have been dueling since long as to whether black is a color or not. When all colors mix, they form white, but black is never formed by combination of colors.



The speaker can also stress on how black absorbs all radiations and how black body holds the promise for the energy sector in the future. There are many other scientific angles to this color, which the speaker can think of.

**Let's take a look at our last sample script:**

"Black is known to absorb all radiations. It is one color, which gives out no radiation. And this has dragged this innocent color in the eye of a storm. Black is observed by many people as an absence of color. The night sky has no color and hence, is black. So, should we believe that coal has no color? Should we say that our hair has no color?

And if black is not a color, then how do we have shades of black? Yes, you got it right! There are shades of black. Scientists have developed a shade of black, which is so dark that people cannot see it. The color also manifests itself in black holes, because no light escapes from this body, hence we see it as black.

# 15. SPHELHTERI Technique

Suppose the topic is '**Television and Modern Society**'. Imagine this topic. Close your eyes for half-a-minute and think. What all can you say about 'television'?

An average speaker on the stage will first imagine the television for two seconds. Then, the speaker will recall the moments spend with the electronic box. Some ideas like 'it helps us to watch soap operas', 'it keeps us entertained' and 'it is harmful as it can be addictive' will come to mind. The speaker may, in fact, also come up with some metaphors like 'eye to the world' and 'idiot box' for television. But the content will mostly revolve around the several experiences with the device.

## **Making Average Content Sound Fantastic**

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The trick to crack non-abstract topics is to think of the topic from various angles. These different angles can be unrelated to each other. Think of how television impacts the society, think how it affects a person's health, move over to educational purpose of television and then, you can end with the technological revolution it has brought.

As you see, it's not so tough to think of content for speech on non-abstract topics. But how do you remember all the various aspects you need to talk about?

Here is the tool for it. Remember the acronym: **SPHELHTERI**

Wondering what it exactly is? Let's end the mystery. This is what it stands for:

- **S**: Social
- **P**: Political
- **H**: Historical
- **E**: Educational
- **L**: Legal
- **H**: Hygiene
- **T**: Technology
- **E**: Environmental
- **R**: Regional/National
- **I**: International

When faced with a non-abstract topic in group discussions, or debates or panel discussions, go through each letter in the acronym. It is not important to adhere to the serial order of the letters; the speaker is free to touch upon 'R' before 'S'. But having this acronym handy can help the speaker to come up with excellent content for a speech and will also help the speaker to add value to the listener.

As you are given a topic, think along these nine parameters. Each parameter will help you develop the content for the topic better. Let's begin with our topic 'Television and modern society'. First, try to define the words. There are three primary words here, viz. 'television', 'modern' and 'society'. Define each one of them.

"In today's world that is obsessed with electronic gadgets and lives in an era of electronics, televisions are an elixir for survival."

This sets the context of the speech. Now, move to each parameter slowly with proper transitions.

# 16. Applying SPHELHTERI: S for Social

Begin thinking about how the society gets impacted. In our topic, the subject is "television". When we think of television, we are reminded of how television has brought a change in our lifestyle, and how it has bridged the distance between people in the world. Think of how television has become a part of our daily life and how it affects us on a day-to-day basis.

**Let us divide the societal impact into three different sections.**

- **Cause:** Speak on why the subject gained prominence in the world. In our case, think of the factors that led to the acceptance of television as an indispensable item in the society. We can talk about the need of company to humans, and the desire for knowing about the world, is what helped TV get included in the list of common items of man.
- **Effect:** Think of the effects, good or bad, that television had in the lives of people. When we think of societal aspects, we can think in two ways, viz. how the subject has made a significant positive impact on the human civilization, and how it has adversely affected it. This helps speakers to get balance in the content, without overtly favoring/opposing the subject.
- **Solution:** Suggest some solutions for the adverse effects of the subject of the speech. In our case, we can think of the steps that can be taken to address the ill-effects of TV, like reducing the number of hours that kids watch TV, or keeping a tab on the type of shows kids watch, etc.



**Let's apply the above-mentioned principles in a working sample:**

**Cause:** Television's future is as expansive as the human mind can comprehend", said Jack R. Poppele, the President of Television Broadcasters Association. Television holds the promise of enlightening the minds of viewers and helps them develop an understanding of the world. The advertisements shown on TV shape our opinion and tastes and preferences.

**Effect:** In today's gadget-obsessed world, televisions are an elixir for survival. Every day we switch on our TV sets and find ourselves connected to the entire world with a few clicks of the remote. The world has changed into a global village, thanks to television. Through television we receive updates on recent happenings in the society, even during our busy schedule.

**Effect:** However, this has also led to a surge in cheap serials that focus more on sleaze and gore, rather than the story and morals. This adversely impacts the mentality of kids of our generation. The harmful rays emitted by TV screens are also leading to eye ailments.

**Solution:** The society today is indebted to televisions for the mold it has set in. Television owes its rise as an indispensable item in the life of the common man, to the desire of each human for company, and for information of other people's lives. That being said, I suggest that we keep a tab on what our kids watch and reduce their hours of watching TV, so that their time gets utilized on something better.

# 17. Applying SPHELHTERI: P for Political

Next, the speaker needs to move on to the political aspects of the subject of speech. In our example, TV plays a major role in spreading the words of politicians and keeps us abreast with the recent happenings in the political world around us. However, the speaker must not only focus on the brighter side of the things. The speaker should also speak of the detriments of television for politics and politicians, at large.

**Divide the political aspect into three categories, as we did for social aspect:**

**Cause:** What makes the subject of your speech a crucial element for politics? Why can't the political sector do without your subject? In our case, think of why our politicians rely on TV so much? Is there any substitute for TV? If so, then bring it up in the speech.

**Effect:** What are the repercussions of the involvement of the subject in politics? In other words, think of our example. How TV impacts the political sector? How does it shape our opinion about politics? Are there only positive effects, or are there negative ramifications of TV as well in politics?

**Solution:** Think of how the negative effects can be addressed. Also, if there are positive angles of the subject in politics, then think of ideas to amplify these positive effects.

**A sample of this section has been prepared for you as follows:**

Radios have decreased in number in the country as even the remote corners of the country have TV sets at homes. However, internet is still out of reach of most people. Hence, even though internet seems to be an alternative for TV in the near future, yet at present, TV is the best medium to reach out to all sections of the society in a country. (**Cause**)



The political leaders realize that we are on television during our leisure hours. Hence, their messages and political campaigns are aired on TV for maximum reach. The advertisements regarding elections and notices issued in public interest are also communicated using televisions. The politicians are well aware of the fact that anything aired on TV will reach a wider mass than any other means of broadcast.

TV shows featuring political speeches impact the masses and have the potential to sway the public in favor of a political party. (**Effect**)

Moreover, TV is also one of the mediums by which journalists try to highlight the misdeeds of our politicians and help the society to bring them to book. Of late, TV has become a medium of cheap propaganda by politicians to spread their divisive views in the masses. (**Effect**)

It is high time that we condemn such attempts by politicians and support the media, which lays bare the evil nexus of some politicians. This will help in maximizing the positive influence of television. Moreover, politicians will also stop misusing TV as a cheap means to broadcast their views and false promises. (**Solution**)

## 18. Applying SPHELHTERI: H for Historical

The next element is '**History**'. The speaker can think of how the subject has been useful or detrimental to the history of mankind. As a speaker, you have to think of how the subject has been an instrumental part of history. Think of how television has impacted lives and societies throughout the course of history. Could the world have been a different place without TV? Could some important events in history happen without TV?

Here we won't divide this section into parts. In case you want to make your own subsections, you are free to do so. However, for this section, we mainly need to focus on how our subject of speech had been important in the near and the distant past.

**Let's take a glimpse at the following example. The speaker can put stress on the parts of the text in bold to add depth and emotion in his speech.**

If you want to know about the past or about ancient rulers and old civilizations, TV does it for you. Just switch on The History Channel and you will be immersed in a different world that enlightens you about the distant past and all elements of recorded history. The TV has been a vital part in shaping our modern world, especially the present times of the US.

In 1960, the debate between Democratic senator, John F. Kennedy and Republic Vice President, Richard Nixon was televised. The charismatic debate took the world by a storm as did the TV coverage of the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1962. Television, since then, has been shaping the political landscape **like nothing else in the world**. In 1969, TV helped the world to witness its proud moment when Apollo 11 moon landing was aired on TV.

In 2004, TV channels broadcasted the jaw-dropping images of the devastation done by Tsunami in the Indian Ocean. That sparked a worldwide drive to help the victims and brought in the much-needed donations from across the globe. Vietnam War was also covered by TV reporters, helping them embed with soldiers at battlefield. Can you imagine that during Nigeria's civil war in 1960s, two battling sides declared a truce to watch football star Pele in action? Without TV, the world **would not have been what it looks like today**.

# 19. Applying SPHELHTERI: E for Educational

When we talk of the role of our subject in the field of education, we must think of how the education sector has been impacted constructively or destructively by the subject, in our case – the television.

## **Let's continue with our example of "Television".**

As a speaker, think if the subject is a major player in the education sector, and why or why not? Television brings to us a lot of educational content. From TV channels dedicated to the cause of education, to TV shows which air educational content at times, the education sector cannot do without TV these days. TV can also foster national integration and can disseminate environmental awareness. It can also compensate for teacher's incompetency or student's incompetency.

On similar lines, think of the harmful effects that TV has on the minds of learners. If there are negative effects of television, bring out the remedies for this problem.

## **Let us take a look at an example.**

One of the best applications of TV is in the area of education. Channels like Discovery, History Channel, TLC, Gyan Darshan, etc. help viewers to increase their knowledge on diverse topics by just sitting at their home. What other device can help you learn so much with such a large variety of options? TV channels like Gyan Darshan airs shows throughout the day, which helps the viewers to assimilate vast volumes of theoretical knowledge sitting right in their home.

**Pros:** This can be a blessing for those communities that cannot afford to go to school. In such scenarios, a single TV kept at a single location holds the promise of educating a large number of children by simulating an open school. Practical application of principles and laboratory experiments can also be recorded and aired through these channels. TV can thus help to achieve enhanced social quality in education, reduced dependency on verbal teaching by teachers, flexibility of time and space for learning and an interactive way to grasp knowledge.

**Cons:** However, there are many channels on TV which are open to view for kids, but are not healthy, in terms of content, for the minds of these learners. Cinemas and TV shows broadcasting spurious and pornographic content spoils the kids and distracts them from studies. Moreover, the gore scenes in movies severely impact the ethics of young viewers. Movies featuring romance and relationships are sometimes preferred. This is a grave problem and needs to be addressed.

**Solution:** Parents have to keep a watch over what their kids are watching on TV and have to make the TV viewing experience a beneficial and fulfilling one.

## 20. Applying SPHELHTERL: L for Legal

Think of how your subject of speech helps to ensure justice to the world. This section may not fit in all the time. There will be times when you will find **that your subject actually does not contribute to legal or judicial process in your country** or in the world. However, in our example, we can certainly talk of TV helping in upholding justice worldwide.

Think of ways the television helps in promoting judicial activism.

- Could we have adequate knowledge on such cases without TV?
- Could all verdicts in the high-profile cases be made if TV had not been there?
- Would the world be this aware of crimes happening around them without TV?

Think of the various sensational cases of crime that have occurred in the country and how the electronic media brought up the issue and sensitized the masses.



**Let us discuss an example to show how TV helps in the judicial process.**

**Cause:** TV is not just for knowledge and entertainment. It is an indomitable medium for vociferous social activism. Media houses spread awareness on various crimes happening in the city. The issues of the world are brought to our notice through television, which encourages us to raise our concerns and fight against such evils.

**Effect:** Do you remember the murder case of Jessica Lal in India? Do you believe that she could have got justice if the media had not raked up the issue in public? Her perpetrator could have just walked scot-free. But media houses, through their incessant coverage, stirred up the masses and launched a crusade for justice for Jessica Lal. Similarly, the gruesome rape case of Nirbhaya was brought to the fore by the electronic media.

**Effect:** The debates, discussions, and journalism reports on TV ensured that the central government took steps to beef up the security of women in India. Looking beyond the confines of the country, activism broadcasted through TV garnered support for the rebels in Arab Spring. Tyrannical governments, like those of Hosni Mubarak and Muammar Gaddafi were brought down after TV coverage of the protests roped in protesters from diverse spheres of life and united them for a common cause.

**Effect:** The scams and scandals in India by the politicians were brought to the limelight by TV channels that eventually led to the downfall of the corrupt government in the elections. TV shows like the Newshour provide us with vital information on various issues plaguing the nation. TV serials like Crime Patrol also make us aware of the different ways crimes are happening in the society around us.

**Conclusion:** TV plays a crucial role in disseminating information about corrupt politicians and autocratic governments, inciting the masses to stand against them.

# 21. Applying SPHELHTERI: H for Hygiene

When the speaker has to talk about health, he/she has to think how the subject of the speech is helping or affecting the area of public health. A speaker needs to take caution that he **doesn't include personal experiences** from his life and family. Personal preferences and subjective tastes are not welcome in speech. In our case, we can think of how TV has been instrumental in the benefit or detriment of public health. Divide this section into three parts again.

**Cause:** What is the impact of the subject on health? Are these backed by scientific studies or not? Did this impact, constructive or destructive, happen in the past as well? In our case, why does TV cause problems for the health of viewers? Do we have any scientific data to support our claim?

**Effect:** What are the consequences of these causes? What are the ailments observed in people who are directly or indirectly associated to the subject? For example, what are the disorders that manifest as a result of TV viewing? Is it a long-term problem or a short-term problem?

**Solution:** Do we have any remedies for this problem? Can we somehow bring these health problems to an end? If yes, what are those solutions? If no, why don't they exist? In our case, a speaker has to think of the solutions to the ailments caused by TV. The speaker can suggest his own solutions as well.

## **Here is a sample script for this section.**

The way television impacts the health sector is unimaginable. Just switch on your television and you will be flooded with advertisements of various health products. There are dedicated channels for promotion and sale of medicinal products through electronic media. However, there are harmful effects of TV on health as well. The harmful rays that are emitted by television sets severely affect our retinas on long exposure.

Moreover, in 1967, a report by General Electric claimed that their TV sets were emitting abnormal levels of X-rays. Although that issue has long been settled, yet the detrimental effects of TV on our eyes remain a cause of concern. Moreover, the sedentary lifestyle inspired by TV is leading to an unhealthy population and growth of couch potatoes. The commercials of fast foods and soft drinks and even liquor brands are making the public highly unhealthy. This problem has to be countered at the earliest.

One of the ways to do so is to air commercials which highlight the ill-effects of smoking and drinking. Furthermore, advertisements like those featuring celebrities like Aamir Khan and Vidya Balan for disseminating information in public interest are the benefits of TV in the area of hygiene. The ads that stress on the importance of free education and the right to hygiene along with the ones that focus on the need of breastfeeding are an incentive to the health sector of the country.

## 22. Applying SPHELHTERI: T for Technology

The next element to focus on is technology. As a speaker, you have to think of how the subject of your speech is impacted by technology. Has technology made a positive difference to the subject of your speech or a negative one?

Think of what technological revolutions your subject of speech has gone through. In our example, we can get loads of information on how TV has benefitted from the technological revolution. From the big metallic boxes to the sleek LCD screens to the futuristic OLED TVs, technology has turned the TV science upside down. We need to divide this section into 3 parts:

**Past:** What had your subject been like in the past? Was it better back in those ancient or medieval days or has it got better with the passage of time? How did the world relate to the subject in the past? In our case, we can think of how TV looked like in the past. How its shape, design and presentation has improved over the years? What technology was used in the past to make television sets?

**Present:** Think of what your subject is like today. How does it exist in the present era and what changes have happened to it? What are the factors that have led the subject to its present form? For a topic on TV, think of how a TV looks like these days and why its shape and design has changed over the years. Is it in a better form than in the past or is it worse? Come up with reasons for the same.

**Future:** Is the subject going to remain unchanged over the course of the next few years or is it going to drastically change? What are the factors that will lead to the transformation? How will the subject be like for future generations? What technology will shape the subject? For TV, think of the futuristic designs and the advancements happening the world over in the field of television. How will the design of a TV look like in the future? Think of these aspects and speak on them.

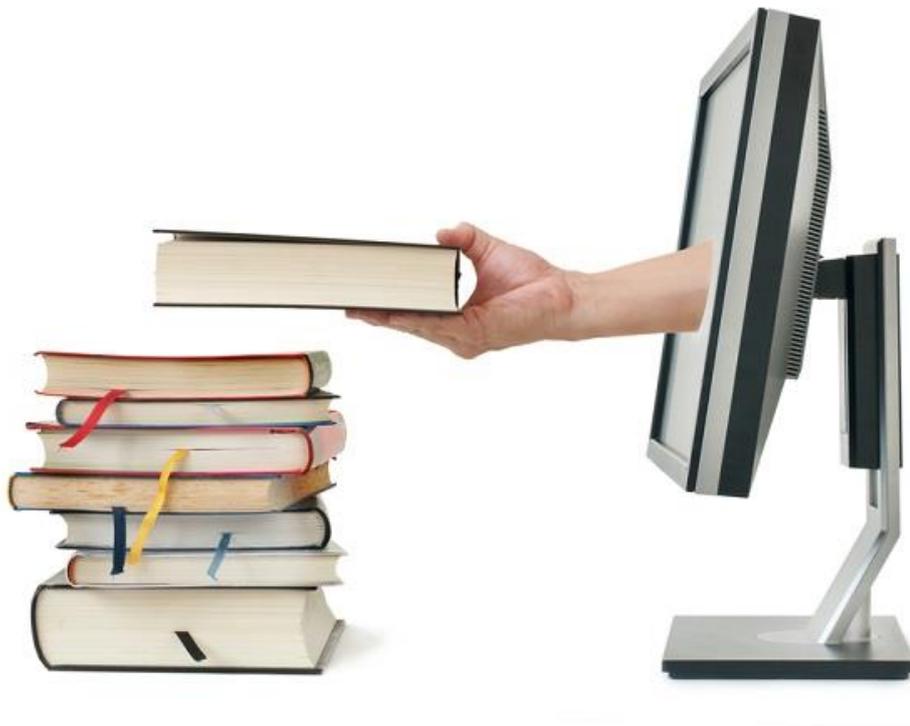
### Let's take a look at the following sample speech:

If you look at your TV sets, you will realize that the face of this device has undergone a spectacular transformation. From being a voluminous box of plastic, it has transformed into a sleek and bright LED screen. The development of modern TV is a testimony to the scientific advancement man has made. We now also have smart TVs that connect to the internet.

In the past, we had voluminous boxes that showed black and white pictures aired and received by an antenna over the rooftops. **In those days, owning a TV was a luxury** and it had a positive impact on the well-being of owners. The owners felt they had been connected to the world across oceans in a matter of seconds, and it provided much needed company to them. Electron guns were used to create an image on the phosphorescent screen.

With time, colored TVs made their way into the market. But if you visit a TV showroom today, you will not find those boxes at all. They have been replaced by sleek LCD and LED screens that are better in terms of resolution and picture quality. They occupy less space

and give a fulfilling experience to the viewers. Electron guns have been replaced by liquid crystals and LEDs.



OLED TV is also on the rise and it is predicted that foldable TVs will become the hot choice of the masses in the future. TV viewing is always an enriching experience that brings friends and families together and hence, people support and buy the latest technology in the TV industry.

## 23. Applying SPHELHTRI: R for Region

When we talk of region, we need to think of how our subject affects the very region we live in. Before exploring how our subject affects the other regions across the globe, we need to think of our own locality or state. **Don't go global, stay local** – that is the mantra of this section. Think of how the subject of your speech is linked to the regional diversity around you.

For example, TV reaches out to people irrespective of their language, education, ethnicity, or religion. This is the main factor behind the success of TV in India. Anyone who can press a few buttons on the remote can watch TV. This way, you need to think of how your subject is linked to the regional variety around you.

### **Following is a sample for our topic on TV:**

Besides technology, TV also disseminates information in a multitude of languages. You may not find information in your language over the internet, but you will certainly find it on television. Which other medium of information on this earth has such an indomitable power to reach out to each and every individual in the country?

If you are thinking of newspapers, you will know that they are for literate masses. For those who cannot read, TV brings some respite. A person might be unable to read and write his native language, but he/she can certainly speak and understand his language. This is where TV helps in spreading information and entertaining even the illiterate masses.

TV can spread the information verbally, which certainly reaches all kinds of sections of the society. TV also shows programs on a variety of cultures around the nation. It helps us peep into the lives of other cultures and learn about their lifestyles.

A newspaper or magazine can pertain to a specific section of the country's population. On the other hand, TV can broadcast as much information about any part of the state or country at the same time, through multiple TV channels. This is the unparalleled power of television in a country, which holds the promise to serve each section of the society at large.

## 24. Applying SPHELHTRI: I for International

In this section, a speaker needs to think of the ways in which his topic can be related to the international forum. Think of where your subject comes to picture in the global scenario. It is to be noted that this section never falls short of ideas.

There must be some way or the other in which your subject is related to things at the global level. Take for example, television. TV is used to watch news which brings to us information from around the world. We can peep into the splendor of different landscapes and the cultures of various countries just at the click of a few buttons. The speaker also needs to keep in mind that it is not important to stay on the earth in this section. He/she can even transcend beyond earth and go to space.

For instance, TV helps us to get a glimpse of other planets and their features through shows aired on channel Discovery. We will divide this section into two parts:

**Current incidents:** Think of the ways in which your subject is related to the recent happenings around the world. How has your subject played a crucial role in those events? For example, TV has brought awareness to the masses about tyrannical governments and has helped sensitize the people of Arab to rise against the autocratic government. TV has also brought to our reach the news on terrorist activities and has encouraged us to stay alert in our country.

**Past incidents:** The past incidents have to be based on facts. The speaker has to come up with facts to highlight how the subject of the speech is related to it. Without facts and figures, the audience may not be able to relate to this section because a majority of the audience do not know about the past incidents.

This way we can frame this section of the speech by taking into account various aspects of how our subject is related to international scope:

### **Let's explain this with the following sample speech:**

TV shows in English are aired around the world, but all regional language shows are not. Moreover, TV has also helped some journalists shoot to international fame. Barkha Dutt, one of the finest journalists in India, shot to fame through her coverage of Kargil war.

With just a click of a few buttons, you can sneak into what's happening in the White House and can listen in detail to the proceedings of the Lok Sabha. Sitting in one corner of India, you can get news of what's happening in the US. Television connects us to the world in seconds. What else connects us so well?

# 25. Impromptu Speaking – Common Errors

Speaking well during group discussions, panel discussions, debates and declamations, require more than just content. There are many other factors like voice modulation, pitch, body language, etc. that come into picture. In this section, we will look at the common errors that speakers commit during impromptu speaking.

## Lack of Gestures

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The most common problem with public speakers is the statue like position, which they assume on the stage. The stage lies vacant and yet the speakers don't utilize the podium at all. They stand at one place as if they have been glued to that location. This may put the amateur speaker at ease, but it comes across as a sign of nervousness and hesitation. The audience does not prefer a person to stand fixed at one place and speak.

It is considered to be acceptable only when the speaker is standing behind the lectern. So, it is always advisable to move on the stage and deliver the speech. However, please exercise caution during group discussions, as walking is not allowed in these sessions.

## Lack of Energy

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If the speaker cannot breathe energy into the speech, it is not possible to expect the audience to listen to it with passion. Energy is required in the delivery of speech so as to excite the audience about the topic and to keep it glued to the speech.

In group discussions, if the speaker speaks with lack of passion, he/she will be certainly interrupted by the fellow speakers and hence, this person will lose a chance to put his point forward. It is very important for the speaker to show enthusiasm and conviction towards what he/she is speaking.

In panel discussions, no one will listen to a speaker who cannot bring power in his words. If no one understands what the person has said, his/her point will not be taken forward. So, it is vital to show energy and confidence towards one's speech. Look at the person in the middle of the audience. Does he look like a person who is interested in the discussion?



## No Rapport with Audience

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A person feels like listening to an individual with whom he/she has a rapport. It is the case in any casual talk or even in formal discussions. Impromptu speech is also the same. The audience will consist of people whom the speaker has never met before. So, how does the speaker go about building the rapport?

The first 2 minutes of any speech are considered to be very crucial for establishing rapport with the audience. The listeners must be at ease with the speaker. To establish that bond between the speaker and the listener, it is very important to start the speech with some questions, which can incite the audience to be attentive. Ask the audience something related to your topic.

For example, the topic is "Do you believe UN represents the consensus of the world?" The speaker can start with a question like "How many of you believe that UN's statements are taken seriously by all member countries?" This will bring the audience out of its slumber and will force them to think of an answer. The pressure on the mind of the audience to think will help them establish rapport with the speaker.



## Use of Notes

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Although high profile people use notes for their speech, but that is a prepared one. When giving an impromptu speech, speakers must make a note of avoiding notes as far as possible. Use of notes comes across as lack of confidence. It can also lead to unnecessary interruptions in the speech as the speaker has to look down time and again to find his next

words. **Writing key points on hands is not an option.** It is better to have a sheet of paper as notes, rather than words scribbled on hand, as the latter conveys unprofessionalism.

Even if notes are being used, it is important to note that the font size must be large enough to let the speaker see the words from a distance, without him/her bending his/her head too much. When using notes, the speaker has to keep raising his/her head time and again to see the audience so that the eye contact is maintained with the audience. It is also important to index the start of a new paragraph or a new section or a new topic, to avoid missing the flow in between. It must be easy for the speaker to find the next line in case he/she forgets the flow.

## No Eye Contact

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How will it feel if your friend speaks to you without looking at you all the time? Will it look nice if the person you are talking with looks away from you throughout the conversation? It definitely won't. Same is the case with impromptu speech. When delivering an impromptu speech, look in the eyes of the listener. Try to spread your angle of vision across the audience.

The speaker must not keep his/her eyes focused in one direction. Each of the audience members must be in the perception that the speaker has looked at him/her at one point of the speech. This evokes **better response from the audience** and the listeners are more attentive towards the speaker's words.

Even during a group discussion, try to look into the eyes of the fellow speakers. A word of caution here! The speaker in group discussions must never look at the moderator. Looking towards the moderator shows that the speaker desperately wants approval for his words. The speaker must only look at the fellow speakers and must point only at them. The moderator has to be considered invisible.

## Disrespect for Fellow Speakers

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This is one of the most common mistakes observed in impromptu speeches, like in group discussions and panel discussions and even in debates. The speakers often interrupt the other speakers and try to put forth their point. It is to be noted that one must never interrupt the other speaker. Respect for fellow speakers is central to a good speech. In case, a speaker needs room to put his point across, he/she can raise his/her hand and contribute to the discussion.

The interruption of other speakers is seen as a negative aspect of one's character and the speaker is seen as authoritative and disrespectful of the panel and other speakers. This dominating nature is never preferred in discussions. Even during debates, it is important to give room to the opponent to put his/her point across. A good speaker is also a good listener. Dominating the session with only one's own words is definitely the secret for a bad speech.

## Rushing with Words

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The speed of the speaker's words matters a lot in making a speech credible or waste. The speed of the speaker must be appropriate for the audience to understand the message of the speech. If the speaker is too fast, the audience will not be able to catch up with the speaker and will partially understand what the speaker is trying to say. This will lead to partial knowledge of the content, which will further confuse the listener. If the pace is too slow, the audience will lose interest in the speech and will feel sleepy. That will mar the presentation of the speech.

**The pace generally gets higher** in impromptu speeches because the speaker at times has a lot of ideas and is desperate to convey his message. But the error he/she does is to convey everything at once. It is crucial to realize that the content and the ideas must be divided into separate chunks and each division must be brought up at different moments in the discussion.

## 26. Impromptu Speaking – Body Language

Impromptu speech sessions are always full of stress and loss of words. It is common to see speakers stuttering during the speech. However, this can be improved by practice and stuttering depends more on whether the speaker has enough content to speak. However, body language is another important factor for a good speech. It is scientifically established that non-verbal communication is a vital part of conversation and body language forms 55% of this non-verbal component. The rest is made of the tone of the speaker's voice.

A good speaker never keeps his/her hands down. The hands must be at the most till the waist level. They must also keep moving. Hands hanging on the side conveys disinterest. If the body language of the speaker is not good, audience loses interest in the speech. Hence, the hands must always be held up.



Another factor to be kept in mind is the movement of the head. The head should not be fixed in one direction. It must keep moving, so as to give the impression that the speaker's eyes are covering the entire audience. In group discussions, don't look at a single person. Move your head around and look at other speakers as well. Point towards them and ask them questions.

### **The hands must never be clasped**

Crossed arms and clasped hands are signs of defensive position and convey introvert behavior. Hands folded at the back are also discouraged. The hands must also not move too much. Pointing fingers at fellow speakers or towards the audience is not recommended as it is generally perceived as a rude gesture. Instead, the speaker must have an open palm and that must be used to point to the audience or fellow speakers.



### **Moving on the Stage or Dias**

Too much of moving on the stage is generally discouraged. The audience must not get distracted by the movement of the speaker on the stage. It is not important to reach out to the corners of the stage for the sake of stage utilization. The speaker must limit himself to a circle of a few feet radius with the center of the stage as the center of this circle.

### **Hand movement**

Excessive hand movement or body movement on the stage is seen as a sign of nervousness and self-doubt. The feet must also not drag on the floor. The screeching sound made by dragging feet is highly disliked by all kinds of audience.

### **Head Position**

The head must always be held high and looking down at the floor is highly discouraged. Looking down again conveys self-doubt and is regarded by audience as lack of conviction. It means that the speaker is thinking hard about what to speak. The speaker must have his head up and must look directly at the audience.

### **Smiling Face**

The last but one of the most important things is having a smile. It brings a positive countenance to the speech. Even during group discussions and debates, it is recommended to bear a gentle smile over the face. That shows the speaker is open to ideas and is receptive of counter opinion as well. Having a serious and drab face conveys hostility.

**However, smiles have to borne with caution** - It is not a good practice to smile even while discussing tragic topics, like natural crises or the death of a person. There should

not be unnecessary flow of emotions. The speaker must remember not to fake emotions on the stage. A fake emotion, if detected by listeners, can backfire in the worst ways.



Body language is not only about hand movements or body movements. It is also about facial expressions. Proper facial expressions are important to convey appropriate emotions. There are many other factors that together make up the guidelines of positive body language for speakers. It is important to mix good ideas with good body language for making the speech successful. A good match of body language and words can make any speech wonderful.

## 27. Impromptu Speaking - Conclusion

In an ideal world, people would love to be in a situation where someone always asks them to speak on a topic they know well. However, in the real world, we don't have the luxury of choosing our topics, yet we feel the need to speak something on it as others are participating in the discussion.

Dealing with impromptu speech was never an easy task, but approaching the discussion with a calm mind, and implementing the speech techniques that we have discussed in this tutorial will surely help you in accomplishing your assignment with a high degree of professionalism and connect with the audience.