Professional Speaking in Daily Life

Inquire: Public Speaking at Work

Overview

Public speaking isn’t isolated to the classroom. You will have to give speeches no matter what profession you choose. This lesson covers some of the speeches presented in the professional world. First, you will learn how to write a toast. Second, you will learn how to compose an elevator speech. Third, you will learn how to organize an introduction for a guest speaker. Finally, you will learn about impromptu speaking in the professional world.

Big Question: Have you ever had to give a impromptu speech at work?

Watch: Mastering Professional Speaking

Have you ever not had time to prepare for a presentation? This is known as impromptu speaking — being asked a question or being told to present about a topic on the spot without time to prepare a formal speech. Impromptu speaking can be tricky, but this lesson is here to give you some tips and advice on how to make it easier. This lesson will also teach you to give toasts, introduce others, and make an elevator speech.

Toasts might seem like easy speeches that don’t need much preparation, but they do follow a certain formula to ensure they hit the right tone for the event their offered in. After this lesson, you will know the steps to follow to give the perfect toast, no matter how little time you are given to prepare it.

People sometimes don’t consider introductions as speeches. However, an introduction has a specific structural setup that requires a bit of work beforehand. An introduction should never steal the spotlight from the main speaker, and should set the speaker up as a credible source of information for the audience.

One of the most important types of professional speaking is the elevator speech. The elevator speech can help you garner investors, get a job, or attract new clients. Like the other speaking types we discussed, an elevator speech follows a clear set of steps to gain support from someone you want to persuade. The key to a good elevator speech is keeping it brief and being as specific as possible.

As you go through this lesson, think about a time when you heard someone deliver an impromptu speech. What did the speaker do right? What did they do wrong? Also, consider a time when you tried to convince someone to do something your way or to take your side on an issue. How did that go? Were you successful? After this lesson, you will be ready to impress anyone with your professional speaking skills.
Overview

Public speaking is a part of your life that is here to stay. No matter what profession you enter, you will inevitably have to talk to someone, or a large audience. This lesson focuses on these professional circumstances that occur and how to navigate them. You will learn how to compose a toast and an elevator speech, and then how to give a formal introduction. Finally, you will learn about impromptu speaking in a professional setting.

How to Compose a Toast

A toast is a short speech delivered to commemorate a special event, person, or occasion. Toasts should be short and to the point. There are a few steps you should follow to ensure your toast hits all the right notes and leaves your audience with an appreciation of the toast’s subject.

First, you want to get people’s attention and introduce yourself. Briefly explain who you are and why you’ve been asked to speak, usually by explaining your relationship to the subject of the toast. This might mean explaining you’re the sister of the groom, or the leader of the project.

Once you have everyone’s attention and have introduced yourself, move on to the toast itself. This should be a short speech, no longer than four or five sentences. These sentences should take the form of a request, starting with the word “may” such as “may your marriage be long and happy.” The toast should stick to the mood and purpose of the event. After you deliver the toast, raise your glass and offer a parting sentiment. This is usually a statement like “To us!” that others can repeat. The longer you make it, the harder it is for others to join in, so keep it as short as possible.

Mastering the Elevator Speech

An elevator speech is a short proposal speech meant to pull in an audience of one or two people. You want to get these people interested in supporting or investing in your idea, so your elevator speech should be convincing. Whether you are pitching a product, an idea, or even yourself, there are a few steps to follow to ensure success. First, identify your goal. Go into the interaction knowing what you want to accomplish. Do you want to get a job? Get an investor? Sell an item? Whatever it is, you can best achieve it if you know what you want to do before you start speaking.

The first step of the speech itself is to identify what you do. Tell the person what your role is in whatever project or item you are trying to sell. Make it as interesting and specific as possible, but also as brief as possible. It is unlikely that you will be in an elevator when you give the speech, but imagining you only have the time of an elevator ride will help you understand how fast and to-the-point these speeches need to be. After explaining what you do, it’s time to tell what makes you unique. You have some sort of angle, or something that makes you better than something else. Be able to explain that difference in one or two sentences.

From there, try to pull your audience in by asking a question. Ask how they currently handle whatever issue you have a solution for. This engages them and allows you to explain how your idea can directly be beneficial to what they do. Next, you should have a clear conclusion summarizing what you offer and how much it can benefit the audience. This speech shouldn’t be long or complicated, and the way to make
sure it sounds smooth and natural is to practice. So, before you find yourself in an elevator with a billionaire, be prepared with what you would say.

How to Introduce Yourself or Others

An introduction is a short speech given to let an audience know who is about to speak to them. An introduction should be short and include information about the speaker. When introducing someone, you want to know their professional history — enough to explain who they are and why they are qualified to speak at the occasion. It is also a good idea to know a few fun facts about their life to lighten the mood and help the audience relate to the person. And obviously, you’ll want to know their name. Present the information in this order: accolades and qualifications, humorous story, and name.

When writing the introduction, consider the tone of the event to determine what kind of fun facts to use. You want the introduction to be short — no more than a minute or a minute and a half. When explaining the speaker’s qualifications, be honest and factual. Don’t embellish to make the person sound better.

Understand that you are not the center of attention, so don’t take the person’s thunder in the introduction. Finally, make sure to practice. The introduction should be smooth and pleasant, which is easier if you’ve practiced and know what you will say.

Impromptu Speaking in a Professional Manner

Impromptu speaking is on-the-fly speaking with little or no advance preparation of the speaking topic. Often, in a professional environment, you will be asked to give impromptu speeches during meetings or when training new people. Impromptu speaking gives you an opportunity to focus less on the presentation and more on connecting with your audience. Since it isn’t prepared, focus on ensuring that what you say makes sense and is helpful.

It might seem daunting to have to speak about something with no warning, but in a professional setting, you should know what you would be asked to talk about. It will likely be a topic you work with every day and can talk about confidently just by knowing how to do your job well. In these instances, keep your information factual while making yourself look as knowledgeable and impressive as possible. You want to come off as confident, not arrogant. Part of walking that line comes from the audience connection you are able to build during an impromptu speech.

Reflect Poll: Which Will You Use?

Which of the following do you think will be most prevalent in your life?

- toast
- elevator pitch
- introduction

Expand: Impromptu Speaking Tips

Overview

Impromptu speaking sounds much scarier than it actually is. In this section, we will cover some tips to make it easier for you.
Tips and Tricks

Just because impromptu speaking isn’t prepared doesn’t mean you can’t practice. However, practicing for impromptu speaking is easy. Have conversations with people. Practice explaining things about your job by telling your family or friends. You can practice impromptu speaking every day without even realizing it.

Keep in mind what your prompt is. When your boss asks you to speak about something, keep that topic in mind. It becomes your thesis statement, and that is what you should center your speech around. Don’t stray too far from the original topic.

Next, remember that people learn in different ways, so repeating yourself isn’t a problem, and can actually be helpful! Some people need to hear material several times for it to sink in. Some people need to hear the material in different ways, so always try to offer an example to help it make sense. Any way you can relate unknown information to something familiar helps the audience learn faster and better.

Confidence is key when it comes to impromptu speaking. Everyone knows you were just put on the spot, but if you can talk confidently and act like you were completely prepared — even if you weren’t — it reflects better on you. Impromptu speaking isn’t only an opportunity to teach something; it’s an opportunity to show off your knowledge and your strengths to your boss. Think of it as a chance to show how valuable you are to them and to your job. Doing so will reflect well on you and can make things easier when it comes time for raises or reviews.

Lesson Toolbox

Additional Resources and Readings

A video offering tips on how to make an introduction at a professional event
  ● Link to resource: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUbuIRfm5F4

A video offering tips on how to make a toast
  ● Link to resource: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z38PoXhzg20

A video offering tips on how to make an elevator pitch
  ● Link to resource: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lb0Yz_5ZYzI

Lesson Glossary

toast: a short speech delivered to commemorate a special event, person, or occasion

elevator speech: a short proposal speech, meant to pull in an audience of one or two people

introduction: a short speech given to let an audience know who is about to speak to them

impromptu speaking: on-the-fly speaking with little or no advance preparation of the speaking topic

Check Your Knowledge

1. Impromptu speaking is a prepared speech, such as a eulogy.
   a. True
   b. False
2. A toast often includes a wish for the future.
   a. True
   b. False

3. Your elevator speech should be brief and well-rehearsed.
   a. True
   b. False

Answer Key:

Citations

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