

TAKE A STAND: IMPROMPTU PRESENTATION

ACTIVITY: You have 5 minutes to draft a 1-2 minute oral argument in which you take a stand on an issue, centering your speech as much as possible around a single rhetorical appeal (pathos, logos, ethos, kairos, nomos: your choice). You can use either subjective or objective evidence; you should choose your topic from the menu of topics listed below.

TIME:

- 5 minutes drafting
- 1 minute practice (see what a minute of speaking feels like!)
- 1-2 minutes delivery in front of the class (you will be cut off after 2 minutes)

GOALS: This activity has several goals.

1. To help you become more comfortable with speaking in front of our class
2. To encourage you to think through some key elements of public speaking, including how to make a structured argument that uses evidence and is engaging to the audience
3. To demonstrate that even impromptu speeches involve drafting, structure (introduction, evidence, conclusion, signposts), strategic use of rhetorical appeals, and practice.
4. To encourage you to move past being intimidated by public speaking and instead see it as an opportunity to be creative and have fun.

TOPICS (take a stance on one of the debates below):

- Facebook or Twitter?
- Chocolate shake vs. vanilla shake?
- iPhone or Android?
- Mac or PC?
- Take out: Chinese food or Pizza?
- Better pet: Cats or Dogs?
- Ice: Crushed or cubed?
- Snowboarding or scuba diving?
- Modern Warfare 3 or Skyrim?
- Colbert or The Daily Show?
- Vampires or Werewolves?
- [Your own choice – needs to be something not too serious about which you can take a stand]

PROCESS:

1. Choose a topic and a rhetorical appeal.
2. Brainstorm: What is your argument or stance? Write it down. Then write down the best two or three reasons supporting that stance. Be sure to choose evidence that the audience might relate to. Include objective and/or subjective evidence:
 - Subjective evidence refers to evidence taken from personal life experience or anecdotes of people you know.
 - Objective evidence refers to evidence/ testimonials/ accounts in the public domain such as records, history, literature, news reports, famous people, etc.
3. Write an outline. Your goal is not to write a script out word-for-word but to create an outline of your ideas and the way you intend to deliver them.
4. Be sure to think through what sort of introductory hook you want to use to engage your audience – choose a hook based on your featured rhetorical appeal. Make sure to keep your hook short and sweet – you only have 1-2 minutes, after all! You might open with a quick personal anecdote, a rhetorical question, joke, a definite statement, or an explanation of why you selected the topic.
5. Look over your outline and integrate transitions and signposts (terms like “next”, “In summary”, or enumerated lists etc. that help your audience *hear* the organization of your argument)

Adapted from an activity created by Dr. Sohui Lee

TAKE A STAND: IMPROMPTU PRESENTATION

6. Write a conclusion that summarizes but also ends with a strong statement, a rhetorical question, or even a relevant quote.
7. PRACTICE/REVISE. You will be given a one-minute practice session to quietly run through your material, then another 2 minutes to reflect and tweak your outline.

FINAL TIPS

Try not to apologize if you lose your place or forget. Pause a second to gather your thoughts, then keep talking. Remember, everyone in the audience is extremely empathetic.

Make eye contact with everyone in the room. Keep in mind that you are not just speaking to me (your instructor); our entire class is your audience.

Don't run to your seat when you're done: Take in the applause before heading back to your place!

Try to look like you are enjoying yourself and that you're happy to speak, even if you are nervous. Enthusiasm is infectious – it's hard to engage with a speaker who looks like the act of public speaking pains him/her ... or like s/he finds the topic boring.