

## **Effective Impromptu Speaking**

Speaking with little advance preparation, or impromptu speaking, can be intimidating. Effective spontaneous speaking is, however, essential for success in academic and professional life.

### **A. Common contexts requiring good impromptu skills**

- Interactive classes, such as those based on case studies
- Study groups
- Team projects
- Professional meetings and networking
- Job Interviews
- Q & A sessions of presentations

### **B. Strategies to help in these situations**

- Anticipate the likelihood of your contributions being solicited and the topics being covered in a given context. In most cases, you will be asked to speak on a familiar subject.
- Speak briefly and directly to the point. Do not ramble or repeat yourself. Unless the context requires it, do not feel that you must provide a lengthy treatment of a topic. A refined three-step approach works well:
  - Make a short statement to enter the topic
  - Concisely make your point
  - Exit gracefully
- If concrete detail and examples are required, try to relate your contributions to the topics and experiences you know best
- Use gambits to “buy time,” organize your thoughts and create movement.
- Remember the power of nonverbal communication. Speak at a reasonable rate and volume. Use your eye contact, posture and gestures to convey confidence and sincerity.

MIT OpenCourseWare  
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

21L.020J Globalization: the Good, the Bad, and the In-Between  
Fall 2016

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.