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.