Extemporaneous Speaking- Best Use of Prep Time

Prep time in Extemporaneous Speaking is the most valuable time of the round. Thirty minutes go by very quickly, and only those who manage their resources will do well. Over the course of this article prep time will be broken down into what should be done and how long it should take.

Time begins once the topic of the speech is selected. There is only so long before a speaker needs to start formulating their points and their mode of attack. However, this is only possible if a speaker has an understanding of the topic itself. This alone is normally where the best Extempers set themselves apart. One of the biggest issues Extempers are faced with is ignorance to a topic. If a topic is chosen where little is known, much of a speaker’s prep time is wasted in just figuring out what the issue is instead of confronting it with a knowledgeable understanding. In order to combat this an Extempor needs to spend time during the week reading up on current events and their effects on the world. If a rogue news story is encountered, spend the week learning about it. Prep is not the time to learn new stories. In order to best utilize prep time, limit figuring out the issue to about zero minutes. It should have been done during the week. In addition, already being informed of the topic will only increase confidence levels for prep and speaking in the round.

After a topic and angle has been chosen, that is when to spend time outlining the points to be developed in the speech. This should be about ten minutes of the prep time. An orator should be figuring out not only what to say, but the evidence that will be used to back it. In
the first five minutes build the three points. For instance, the first point will identify the issue, the second point will propose all solutions, and the third will be a suggested course of action. Further, in the first five minutes not only does the framework of the speech need to be built, but a thesis statement must be finalized. After all of this is finished, use the second five minutes to find articles which validate the speech’s main points. This is why organization of the boxes is so crucial. There cannot be any wasted time trying to find an article. It has to be right there and accessible. Also, it is important to note that each of the three points will need to have at least one source of support. Remember, this is not just a commentary but an argument which has to be backed by facts.

Once the framework of the speech is complete, it is now time to figure out what the introduction will be. Because the first ten minutes of prep was used to think of a thesis and main points, it will be much easier to create an introduction which has a smooth transition into the thesis. Here is the chance to get creative in Extemporaneous Speaking. Choose something that is fun, and possibly funny, as an attention getting device. The rest of the speech is going to be facts, so use the introduction to add some variety. If humor does not suit the speech’s tone, choose a unique historical fact or account that relates to the point being made. Remember though, whatever is chosen needs to be reiterated at the end of the speech. So do not choose something recklessly.

After that is complete, there will be fifteen minutes remaining of prep time. Use this time to start memorizing the speech and working on the flow of transitions. An orator needs to start thinking things through
including the length of time expected to cover each point. In addition, plan how to smoothly and accurately quote the speech’s sources. No one wants to be in the middle of their speech and accidentally say the same source twice because they mixed it up on two points. Also, as stated earlier, work on how and when to transition between points. Creating good flow helps with delivering an organized, easy-to-follow speech. A speech needs key phrases which will allow an orator to wrap up one point and move on to the next with little effort expended. When coming down to the last two minutes of prep time, take the chance to cool down and stop thinking about the speech. Allow some rest for the brain to avoid entering the round stressed. Trust that what was done during prep time will be sufficient to help complete a strong presentation.

These are some hints for how to manage time during prep. If new to Extemporaneous Speaking, try this technique for the first few times. If it is working, great. If not, tweak a few things and find a pattern of practice that works. Whatever technique is devised and used, stay consistent. And always be sure to do the necessary homework before the tournament to not waste precious prep time. Following this advice will lead to a successful Extemporaneous Speaking season.