Extemporaneous Speaking- Breakdown of Timing

When you are doing an Interpretive event timing is something that can be whittled down and shaped outside of competition. Timing is one of the lesser worries; every performance may have slight nuances, but the words do not change. In Extemporaneous Speaking though, timing is critical. The structure of a speech might translate across rounds, but being in control and aware of timing and structuring your Extemporaneous speech around limited time is a practiced skill. In order to enrich your time keeping abilities, here are some helpful hints:

**PRACTICE.** Part of Extemporaneous self regulation is being personally conscious of time. You do not have to be a natural stopwatch, but through constant practice you do begin to hone a sharpened awareness of how long it feels to do a particular component of your speech. Mostly, it will come to being cognizant of your regular speaking speed and patterns (slow/fast/pauses) and how those influence your timing. With practice you will also learn to better think on your feet and eliminate time by not searching for words. This saves time, but it also helps with delivering a better speech. Further, ALWAYS do a practice run of your speech during your prep time to give yourself an idea of where you can improve.

**Pay attention.** There is a reason why the judge gives you hand signals. And not just the one minute, thirty-second, wrap-up signals! Look for all of them. Knowing how much time remains for your Extemporaneous speech will better help you structure your piece while you talk. Do you need to stretch or slow down? Who knows unless you look! This will allow you to give a balanced speech and fully demonstrate your timing expertise.

**Breakdown.** Here is a breakdown of the structure for an eight minute Extemporaneous Speaking piece:

**Introduction:** 1:30

**First Main Point:** 1:30 (5 minute hand signal)

**Second Main Point:** 1:30 (4 or 3 minute hand signal)

**Third Main Point:** 1:30 (3 or 2 minute hand signal)
Conclusion: 1-1:30 (1 minute hand signal)

This comes to a total of 7 minutes, to 7 minutes 30 seconds of speaking time. This leaves you a 30 second-1 minute margin of wiggle room in case you are moving slowly. Obviously, time is tight--all the more reason to practice and look for hand signals!

Master Extemporaneous Speaking timing to gain full control of your piece. Your timing authority will cause you to exude full confidence from your calm in knowing you are in charge--and confidence is always a determining factor of success! Go grab a stopwatch and practice. Pay attention to signals. And always remember you are in control.