Kevin's First Treatise on Limited Preparation

For as long as there has been an IE-L (forensics listserv) there has been a semi-annual discussion about the merits of certain organizational strategies for extemp and impromptu. In the last year or two this has finally abated to some degree. In all honesty, I think this abatement is more due to the growing lack of structure in these events than any consistent philosophy about them.

What I have attempted to do here is set-forth a philosophy of good limited preparation structure, research, and presentation. There are good arguments, grounded in sound rhetorical theory, that justify certain structural choices. Ultimately, what we do in terms of how we present these speeches should always be grounded in those principles. Fads can kill, and I think some of the fads we are now seeing in the practice of limited prep are not rhetorically sound.

So, let's take a look at some helpful guiding principles.

Why Do Norms Exist?

First, it's important to say a word or two about why competitive norms exist. Ask yourself how many times you've heard phrases like, "We NEED to use three points because that's what everyone else does" or "my after dinner speech HAS to be problem-cause-solution in design because that's what the judges expect" or--my personal favorite--"if my crit method doesn't have steps it won't work." Why do we believe these things to be true? Is there a rational basis for these assertions or do we just do them because, under the force of the "ad populum fallacy" (the bandwagon appeal), we believe "everyone is doing it!" If you look at the "rules" for individual events (you can read them on the NFA website) they are short and under-developed. For example, you will **not** find a rule anywhere on paper that says a prose cannot be "programmed" (multiple pieces). You also **won't** find a rule that says "visual aids cannot be used in extemp" (though you would never see them). You **won't** find a rule about how script books are to be opened or how eye contact or focal points are to be made. These are all concepts that have evolved through judges expressing their likes and dislikes, through the influences of other disciplines (like theater), and through the evolution of people's tastes. When something works, people copy it. Then it becomes the norm. For those of you who have had me for rhetoric courses, you know I'm very fond of a concept called "the social construction of reality." That's really what this is. Our discourse shapes our reality. If a group of us points to a lemon and call it "chair," and enough of us keep doing that, in our reality the lemon becomes "chair." The same is true of forensic practices. Events are defined by the community as a whole. Those definitions are continuously evolving.

Are these norms good or bad? Well, it depends on your perspective. Knowing the prevailing norms means we can adapt to the desires of our audiences. That usually means we are more successful. But what happens when we allow ourselves to become slaves to counter-intuitive norms? If the community norm evolved to say that the best way to win in poetry was to scream loudly eleven times during the performance, would we do it?

Probably the most immediately example of norms out of control is the use of sex humor in after dinner speaking. Speeches that go for those jokes DO succeed, but not everyone wants to perform that way.

Here's the rule I've gradually come to embrace when it comes to such norms. If you routinely ask others "Why is norm X true?" and the only answer they can provide is, "Just cause it's that way" there's a problem with the norm. If a rational or pragmatic argument can be made for the norm, such as "This format makes for a stronger deductive argument," or "This way of performing makes it easier for the audience to comprehend the message," then you have a strong reason to accept the norm. Somewhere in the middle falls what I will call "the pragmatic test." Does performing the norm mean I have a greater chance of competitive success without doing something that I personally feel uncomfortable with morally, or reject based on some reasonable principle of education? If submitting to the norm is relatively harmless, and still morally, ethically, and educationally justifiable, then we might have an argument for submitting to it. These situations have to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. That's part of being a good communicator.

What Norms Exist in Limited Preparation Events?

There are a variety of norms that prevail in limited preparation events. Some, I believe are useful. Some are not. These can be categorized further into "enduring norms" (those that have always been there and will likely remain) and "ephemeral norms" (those that come and go). I've organized some of these into a handy chart to describe what I think of some of these.

Enduring Norms

When we say a norm is "enduring" it really means that it is a practice that is largely unchanging. Some practices, like a preview statement, are generic to all public address activities. Others are more specialized.

Name	Description	Value?
Must cite sources in extemp	It's pretty much always been tradition that you have to have sources. The intensity of the citations has varied a lot, however. In the 90s 6 or 7 sources was fine for national finals. Each year the number seems to gradually inch upward.	It's important. I feel six sources is optimal, with maximum variety. I personally don't believe full citations are necessary, and would actually prefer more casual citations like "Last week's Time," but this is one of those norms that is more or less non-negotiable.
Must state the question/quotation	Whether it be extemp or impromptu, there has always been an expectation that the question is stated or the quotation is presented.	It's a norm worth keeping. Judges often don't not read their copies of the questions or the quotation.
Answer the question. Agree or disagree with the quotation.	There has pretty much always been an expectation that this will be done.	Very valuable. For many speeches the answer functions as the thesis. In impromptu, specifically, the failure to state agreement or disagreement can result in initial confusion on the part of the judge about the substance of your argument.
Preview and Review	Previews and reviews are old. The Greek and Roman rhetoricians talked about them and even had special names for them.	A must. You need to give your audience an anchor. Moreover, studies show that repetition of concepts in threes increases retention. So when you preview, then deliver the point, then review, you've satisfied that cognitive need.

Ephemeral Norms

"Ephemeral norms" might be characterized as "fads" or "popular techniques." These vary from time to time. Speaking from personal experience, I have been around long enough to see some of these practices come and go more than once in "waves."

Name	Description	Value?
Source citations in extemp intros	Over time this has waxed and waned in popularity. Some believe it adds sophistication. Others believe it is a cheap ploy to add more sources.	It is good if the source makes for a more meaningful into. The downside of citations in the intro is that the intro often sounds stale or stuffy. There is utility in treating the intro as a lighter contrast to the more formal aspects of the body of the speech.
"Pop" Methods for Impromptu	Certain methods, such as "mini crit," "Hegelian dialectic," etc. come into vogue and out on two or three year cycles.	These methods will be discussed in greater detail below. Suffice it to say, a structure or method is designed to enhance the meaning of the message. If it does that—great. If its only purpose is to be trendy, you're using it for the wrong reason.
Source "Stacking"	An increasingly common practice in extemp, and a growing practice within points of impromptu is to "stack" sources or examples without providing sub-structure.	This technique creates a false appearance of depth and may actually contribute to confusion for judges who came of age during earlier eras. The reason for sub-structure in a point is to demonstrate a logical sequencing of an argument. Usually, when sources are "stacked" the material being presented is redundant.
Pop Culture Examples	There is an argument that some coaches make in favor of using current pop culture examples (such as movie and music celebrities). The argument is that these references are more widely accessible.	I think I'm going to be sick! Sure, there are occasions where celebrities have a great story to tell. That's an appropriate time to use them. But like alcohol, these should only be consumed in moderation (if at all).

Categories of Reasoning and Why They Impact Limited Prep Structure

Now that we've talked a little bit about norms, our discussion of what is acceptable and not acceptable in different competitive situations can proceed. What many students forget when they work with structuring limited prep speeches is that some of the structural "rules" have their origins in literally thousands of years of rhetorical scholarship related to the cannon of organization (dispositio). More immediately, an understanding of the taxonomy of different kinds of arguments informs the structural choices we make.

As most students of argumentation or logic know, we usually talk about reasoning in two, broad overarching categories: inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning. Within each of these categories different scholars of argument break out sub-categories. Traditionally we call inductive reasoning *the synthetic process of moving from specific examples or cases to generalizations about the characteristics of a class of examples or cases*. Conversely, we tend to refer to deductive reasoning as *the process of moving from inductively established generalizations to structurally specific conclusions*. One of the mistakes often made in logic courses is to over-simplify this concept. That is, sometimes we say induction takes us from "specific to general" and deductive from "general to specific." But the terms "synthetic process" and "structurally specific" are very important in our discussion. The deductive process is highly dependent on the "form" of an argument; thus, we sometimes encounter arguments that make sense structurally, but defy all common sense experience. Likewise the inductive process creates an artificial synthesis of material.

Within the two broad types of reasoning we can sub-divide individual categories of arguments. The chart on the following pages illustrates these in greater depth.

Inductive Reasoning	**Deductive Reasoning**
Argument by Example: The name really says it all. We look at a few examples, and based on those examples we draw generalizations. Example: *Marie doesn't wear her seatbelt. Tyler doesn't wear his seatbelt. Tyson doesn't wear his seatbelt. Conclusion—Truman Forensics students don't wear their seatbelts.* Potential Problem: *The problem here is one of sampling. A hasty generalization may have occurred in which we conclude that based on these three examples alone a behavior is exhibited by everyone in the "class." (Of course, the argument is true…but we won't go there.)*	**Argument by Causal Generalization**: The easiest way to think of this argument is that it attempts to work in the opposite direction of the argument by causal correlation. Inductively, through a correlation, use of examples or analogies, we have concluded that some relationship exists. Now we are attempting to apply the generalization to specific cases. Example: *We know that smoking causes lung cancer. Tyler smokes a lot. Ryan smokes pretty often. Tyson has been smoking cigars and pipes for a long time. Chances are, these guys are going to get lung cancer (YOU GUYS NEED TO QUIT!!!)* Potential Problem: *Just because a correlation exists does not mean the relationship will be true in all instances. Some relationships are stronger than others. Sometimes intervening circumstances can get in the way---perhaps they quit, or have a particularly strong immune system. Or maybe they don't inhale ☺*

Argument by Analogy: We make comparisons between two cases or classes of things. We conclude that if the two cases or classes are similar in most respects, then a characteristic exhibited by one is likely to be exhibited by the other.

Example: Kevin is overweight. Todd is overweight. Kevin coaches forensics. Todd coaches forensics. Kevin wears glasses. Todd wears glasses. Kevin has an office in Kirk Memorial. Todd has an office in Kirk Memorial. Todd carries his multi-tool with him everywhere. Therefore, Kevin will carry his multi-tool everywhere, too.

Potential Problem: Kevin leaves his multi-tool in his desk and often forgets that he owns one. While the two individuals are alike in many characteristics, they are not alike in all characteristics.

Argument by Sign: Depending on the author you read this may be classified as inductive or deductive reasoning. It really depends more on how the argument is used. Usually what we are saying is that our experience has lead us to believe a certain class of symptoms means a condition exists. When we see those symptoms we conclude the condition is there.

Example: A certain male coach from Indiana has a tendency to wear heavy eye makeup, wear bright primary colors, and don lovely flowing silk scarves. He must have been an interper when he was in college.

Potential Problem: Said individual might just have good fashion sense (or bad, depending on your opinion). While interpers often have interesting fashion sense, we cannot necessarily establish the relationship as a reliable one.

Argument by Causal Correlation: Scientific studies, especially surveys and experiments that use statistical methods, make correlations. These arguments attempt to establish a relationship between cause and effect.

Example: Studies over several decades have gradually reached the conclusion that smoking causes lung cancer. These conclusions have been researched through experimentation, tracking the behaviors of smokers, and the incidence of conditions like lung cancer, throat cancer, etc.

Potential Problems: Correlations are dependent on the scientific precision of the study, and the relative lack of bias of those who perform the study. Correlations that seem strong now may be disproven later. Most importantly, some relationships are stronger than others.

Syllogisms and Enthymemes: Tests of Deductive Arguments and Rhetorical Syllogisms

Syllogisms and Enthymemes: These are generally not thought of as arguments themselves, so much as representations of the structure of an argument and a tool for testing an argument's validity. Syllogisms contain three parts and come in three types…

Categorical Syllogism (No qualifications):

Major Premise: All men are mortal.
Minor Premise: Socrates is a man.
Conclusion: Socrates is mortal

Hypothetical Syllogism (If…then construction):

Major Premise: If it's Friday we must be at a tournament.
Minor Premise: Today is Friday.
Conclusion: We must be at a tournament.

Disjunctive Syllogism (Either…or construction):

Major Premise: As a competitor I can either do debate or individual events.
Minor Premise: I have chosen to do individual events.
Conclusion: I cannot debate.

The first example is the classic Aristotle used to introduce the concept of the syllogism. The latter two examples are flawed. Not all Fridays involve tournament travel. There is no logical reason why a student can't do both debate and individual events.

An Enthymeme is a syllogism that is missing one of its premises. Usually it is an "assumed" major premise.

Minor Premise: Nate is performing "Night Mother."
Conclusion: Nate doesn't stand a chance of breaking with that piece.

Assumed Major Premise: People who perform "Night Mother" cannot break.

Potential Problems: The fact that Nate is male might make the "Night Mother" performance challenging. But setting that problem aside for a moment, the assumption is that the piece alone renders it ineffective. It ignores the possibility of a truly stellar performance. However, one will see in this enthymeme a healthy weight of truth. Aristotle saw the enthymeme as one of the most effective argument forms—calling it the "rhetorical syllogism." Because the audience fills in the blank spot with their preconceived notions they are "invested" in the argument and are more inclined to believe it.

If you've been paying close attention to the explanation of these argument types, and examples used to illustrate them, you may already be forming opinions about what constitutes effective and ineffective means of organizing an argument for impromptu or extemp. We usually rely on argument by example for impromptu, but as you can see, the reliability of these arguments as a truth-seeking device is limited. Extemp tends to use an amalgam of different argument structures—but those arguments tend to occur within points. Consequently, that event allows a much higher degree of flexibility.

Argument Structures in Impromptu

My opinions about the best argument structures in impromptu are informed by what we know about fallacies of reasoning. There are three or four common structures for impromptu, so it is probably worth-while discussing those first, then analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of each in succession.

Standard Three Point Independent Justification (Sometimes Called "Unified Analysis")

Common Version	**Less Common Version**
Intro. I. Example One—Proves the Thesis True II. Example Two—Proves the Thesis True III. Example Three—Proves the Thesis True Conclusion	Intro. I. Area One A. Example One B. Example Two II. Area Two A. Example One B. Example Two III. Area Three A. Example One B. Example Two Conclusion

Anyone who has talked to me about this approach at length knows that I am definitely not fond of it. However, you will find a significant number of competitors using this approach. It is easy to learn for the beginner, and a safe default option to return to if you cannot develop a more sophisticated analysis. The "Common Version" above is nearly always what you see. However, because of the recent trend toward "source stacking" which we have observed in limited prep events (see comments above), there are occasionally those who are using the variant in the right column.

My main objection to this approach stems from an understanding of three common logical fallacies associated with argument by example. The first is the "hasty generalization"—when we draw an incorrect conclusion based on a limited number of examples. Are three examples truly sufficient to prove a thesis correct? For example, if you had a quotation whose implied thesis is "dictatorship is good," you can probably come up with three examples of where authoritarianism has been effective in some way (Singapore and its economic prosperity, Cuba and its excellent medical system, ancient Rome or Sparta). While these examples might be mildly convincing, there are dozens of contrary examples that disprove the position (NAZI Germany, Haiti, the USSR, Fascist

Italy, Militarist Japan, the list goes on.) Additionally problematic fallacies are the fallacies of composition and division. The fallacy of composition is committed when we assume what is true of individual parts is true of the whole—where we observe something to be true of individual members of a "class" and assume that the same will be true when the cases are united together. The fallacy of division works in the opposite direction. We see something is true of an entire class and we assume that, when divided, the same will hold true for the constituent parts. While this composition and division reasoning is far less frequently used in impromptu, the potential remains. Because the time constraints of the event severely limit the number of examples we can use, and the depth of analysis we can give each example, the reliability of the claim is somewhat limited.

Do judges really "test" the reliability of the claim? Sometimes--but not always. More often than not, judges will ask themselves the question, "How easy would it be to plug in a different set of examples and draw the exact opposite conclusion than this speaker draws?" Conversely, they might ask themselves, "How easy is it to plug in ANY example and draw the same conclusion?" Either extreme is harmful for you if other competitors in the round have either (a) extracted a more abstract interpretation of the quotation, or (b) clearly made a strong effort to take the "tough side" of the quotation and have used very specific examples.

The bottom line: This approach is generic. "Generic" will only get you so far.

Two-Point Problem/Cause or Problem/Solution

Problem / Cause	**Problem / Solution**
Intro. I. Problem represented by the thesis. A. Example of Problem B. Example of Problem II. Analysis of the cause of the problem represented by the thesis. A. Example of the cause or theory explaining the cause B. Example of the cause or theory explaining the cause Conclusion	Intro. I. Problem represented by the thesis. A. Example of Problem B. Example of Problem II. Possible solutions to the problem. A. Example of someone or something that solved the problem. B. Example of someone or something that solved the problem. Conclusion

A similar objection can be lodged against these two approaches. It can be argued that because we only isolate one problem (illustrated by two examples) and one cause or solution (illustrated by two examples) we are still potentially guilty of the fallacy of hasty generalization. This is absolutely true. However, an internal "check" is built into this approach that helps mitigate that problem. Because both a problem and a solution or cause must be identified, the structure necessitates proving two arguments. First, the speaker must prove that a problem exists. Second, the speaker must prove there is a clear causal relationship between an action and the problem, or prove that a certain action will

alleviate the bad condition that is observed in the first point. Because these two arguments need to be independently proven, yet are linked together, the analysis has to be deeper. While argument by example is still used here, there is an enthymeme lurking below the surface of each point. To a certain degree, because the analysis is more focused, the speaker is relying on certain assumed premises to be in the minds of audience members.

Another handy approach is to develop examples in parallel. For example, the "A" points of each main point might be about politics, and the "B" points might be about literature. These "linked" relationships strengthen the argument. Such a linking is hard to achieve in the three-point structure because the points stand independently of one another.

This is not to say that the two-point approach is perfect. One of the best objections to it is that speakers often fall into a pattern of making "problem" and "solution" seem like reverse sides of the same coin (Example: People are mean. We should stop being mean.) The logical suggestion here, therefore, is to be less shallow. The problem-cause approach is used less often, and allows a speaker to incorporate many of the intellectual benefits of the "Mini Crit" approach described below without the complicated prep burdens. If problem-solution is used, the speaker simply needs to be careful to not over-simplify the problem and not to provide trite or overly-broad solutions.

Mini Crit

Single Approach Variant	**Double Model Variant (More Common)**
Introduction I. Model to Be Used For Analysis II. Application of Model to One or More Examples Conclusion	Introduction I. Illustration #1 A. Methodology, Philosophy or Theory B. Application to an Artifact II. Illustration #2 A. Methodology, Philosophy or Theory B. Application to an Artifact Conclusion

There are some distinct advantages to the Mini Crit approach. The problem is that it is incredibly difficult to execute during the preparation period if the speaker is not already very adept at regurgitating philosophy, communication theory, or sociological methodologies. Even more difficult is quickly finding artifacts to match the theories to. The common results of this problem are two in number. First, there is a tendency for speakers who use this approach to "can" their crits (meaning very generic methodologies and artifacts are used repeatedly in different rounds). Second, there is a tendency for speakers to loosely apply a model to an artifact with very little understanding of the analysis. While this may well be the most sophisticated approach to impromptu, the problems with execution make it a very risky strategy.

Another problem, especially posed by the more common double model variant, is that pesky hasty generalization. Because the artifact and model are each self-contained within one main point, we are really only looking at two "tests" of the thesis by the end of the speech. In some ways this exhibits some similarity to the three-point analysis, from the standpoint of fallacy potential.

Hegelian Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis

General Approach	**Weighing Approach**
Introduction I. Answer in One Direction II. Answer from the Other Direction III. Suggest a "Golden Mean" Conclusion	Introduction I. Answer in One Direction II. Answer in the Other Direction III. Assert Which Answer is Superior Conclusion

This approach isn't seen that often in competition. It occasionally appears in national final rounds, but I have yet to see it actually rank above 3rd of 4th in the round. The reason is simple. The approach is deliberately non-committal. The speaker is essentially saying, "Well, I can see both sides of this quotation/thesis. So I'm going to present you with both and then tell you why we should be moderate in all things." Because the "General Approach" above is the most common, it means the conclusion to every speech is ultimately the same—moderation is a good thing or "the middle course is the right answer." This makes the approach incredibly predictable. An approach that "weighs" the opposing sides is rarely seen in competition. There's probably a good reason for this. If the speaker has already decided to make up their mind in one direction, it is generally more productive to use the limited time available to do a more thorough analysis of the "correct" side.

So Aren't You Saying No Method is Perfect?

Yes! No method is perfect. The entire concept of impromptu speaking, constrained by a seven-minute combined preparation and presentation period is problematic. Real life impromptu speaking situations, while probably time constrained, very rarely exhibit these kinds of conditions. Impromptu speaking in real life is far more informal. Arguments can be qualified. There is less of an expectation for significant detail.

What we as speakers must do is choose the method that (a) allows us to efficiently use our preparation time, (b) effectively convey an optimally complex argument that (c) is still reasonably easy for the audience to understand and appreciate. I generally believe that the two-point problem/cause approach best addresses these needs, with the two-point problem/solution approach following closely behind. After that, the other methods discussed here can all work effectively in unique situations. Speakers should be familiar enough with each approach to be able to, as the sport utility vehicle drivers say, "Shift on the fly."

Argument Structures in Extemp

I am admittedly much less tolerant of diversity in extemporaneous speaking than I am of diversity in impromptu speaking. This belief stems, in part, from having watched various attempts at "experimentation" crash and burn. I recommend a few basic rules when structuring the extemporaneous speech.

"The Rule of Six"

- Use two or three main points.
- Use three subpoints under each point in a two-main-point speech.
- Use two subpoints under each point in a three-main-point speech.

"Ancillary Rules"

- Internally preview and review the substructure of each main point.
- Provide the "tag" or "argument" being made by each sub-point BEFORE the source.

The approach I recommend is called by various writers "Alternative Justification" or "Unified Analysis." Each main point is an INDEPENDENT answer to the question being posed. This means that, in theory, if any one of the points is proven wrong (or weak), the other point(s) would stand as an independent affirmation of the claim being made in the thesis of the speech.

A Basic Example

Question: Should the United States extend diplomatic recognition to the Republic of Cuba?

Introduction (Containing an attention-getter, statement of the question, answer/thesis statement, statement of significance, and a preview of the main points of the speech.)

I. The U.S. should extend diplomatic recognition because it brings American culture to the Cuban people.

--Internal Preview--
A. Empirically, American influence in other countries has resulted in liberalization.
[International Herald Tribune, June 32, 2003]
B. Diplomatic recognition would likely result in freer commerce and eased restrictions on travel.
[Financial Times, February 30, 2003]
--Internal Review--

II. The U.S. should extend diplomatic recognition because it brings much needed to economic resources to the people of Cuba.

--Internal Preview--
A. Absent a political opening U.S. and western businesses are deterred from cooperating with Cuba.
[The Economist, March 32, 2003]
B. Western investment would be a major boost to the Cuban economy
[The Havana Cigar Times, April 1, 2003]
--Internal Review--

III. The U.S. should extend diplomatic recognition because there are numerous issues that U.S.-Cuban cooperation would benefit.

--Internal Preview--
A. U.S.-Cuban cooperation would greatly benefit political and economic stability in the Caribbean Basin
[The Haitian Chronicle, March 1, 2003]
B. U.S.-Cuban cooperation is key to combating terrorism in the western hemisphere.
[Jane's Intelligence Review, February 30, 2003]
--Internal Review--

Conclusion (Including review, repetition of the question, repetition of the answer/thesis)

As you may have noticed, this speech uses a variety of different kinds of arguments. There are arguments that use empirical proof (examples and analogies), and every point relies on the use of expert opinion, which carries with it greater potential to convince than an example not supported by evidence. One will note that there are some points that are intuitively stronger than others. This means that some of these points might deserve slightly more or slightly less time than the others. Judges may actually note that they find one of the arguments to be weaker, but this does not necessarily diminish the overall power of the speech. It merely suggests there are multiple "good reasons" to accept the answer to the question as correct…even if some reasons aren't as strong as others.

Stacking

A common trend in the last one or two years has been what I like to call "source stacking." Rather than provide sub-points, as the speech above does, the speaker identifies two or three main points and dumps five or six sources under each point, seamlessly connecting the source citations with various brief statements of analysis. This generally demonstrates the speaker has the ability to memorize a lot of sources, but rarely demonstrates depth of analysis. Without at least some time to explain the analysis of a particular source, or link the conclusions of that source with another, the speech ends up being rather shallow. At best the speaker who "stacks" hopes that the judge will enthymematically connect the various loose strands. Unfortunately, that means the judge has to have a lot of background knowledge and connect quite a few dots.

I really hate to use this analogy, but I think it's an apt one. Extemporaneous speakers who feel they must pack their speeches full of many, many obscure sources are overcompensating for what they lack elsewhere—namely the capacity to provide analysis. It's kinda' like us guys when we go out and buy an F-350 because it makes us feel more like "real men." Personally, I'm happy with my little Saturn made of plastic. It gets me where I want to go and it's easy to maintain.

There really is a simple beauty to the sub-structured extemporaneous speech. Most people, whether they acknowledge this or not, think in terms of logical outlines. Sub-points function as building blocks of larger structures. If we can't see how the bricks fit together, it is hard to appreciate the contours of the larger creation. Some people fear that the use of sub-structure will needlessly detract from the time of the speech devoted to analysis. This need not be the case, however, if the speaker exercises appropriate word economy and avoids needless repetition.

I like to teach people to think of arguments in terms of successively larger units (kind of like nested Russian dolls…there's a set in my office if you've never seen any). Each argumentative unit should contain the following elements:

- State it (state the argument)
- Explain it (summarize the argument)
- Prove it (provide the evidence for the argument)
- Conclude it (remind us of what you've said)

If we visualize each sub-point as one such unit, then see each main point as a larger, similarly but more broadly, constituted unit, and then situate these larger blocks in the broadest unit—the speech and its thesis—we have a complete and easy to follow argument. These structures are fundamental to what we teach in the fields of rhetoric and argumentation and can be found in such classic writings as those of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian.

Some Concluding Thoughts

The biggest risk in setting out a set of rules or suggestions about how an event should always be performed is that we will fall into the trap of the normative quagmire described at the beginning of this paper. I will never tell you that there is one and only way to deliver a limited preparation speech. I will also never deny that there are students who use methods I don't like that are competitively successful. It is important, however, to remember that success in limited preparation comes from more than just structure. In impromptu one must know a lot of original examples, must have diversity in examples, and must be able to articulate a very clear and original thesis. In extemporaneous speaking a strong knowledge of history, government, geography, economics and comparative politics makes a world of difference (no pun intended). Good files that are well organized and regularly updated are essential. Above all, a commanding presence that is cheerful, engaged, and even funny makes all of the difference in both of these events. Robots don't win. Human beings do.

Oh…and you need to practice once and a while, too.

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Kevin Will Be Back in
"The Second Treatise on Limited Prep"
…