



15 Impromptu Practice Prompts: **And How to Attack Each.**

Fifteen school-appropriate prompts with a suggested template and angle for each, plus a seven-minute time plan, a worked example, a practice calendar, and a self-scoring sheet. Use a timer and one prompt per session.

How to use this sheet

- 1 Cover the attack plan and read only the prompt.
- 2 Set a timer for 1 minute of prep and 4 minutes of speaking (adjust for your league).
- 3 Speak aloud, standing, without notes.
- 4 Uncover the plan and compare. Your angle can differ; what matters is a clear structure.

Pick your time plan first

NSDA-style Impromptu gives seven minutes in total, with no minimum for prep or for speaking. Your league may use different times, so use the plan that matches your tournament. These are practice suggestions.

PLAN	PREP	SPEECH	BEST FOR
Beginner	2 min	4 to 5 min	First weeks: more thinking time
Balanced	1 to 2 min	5 to 6 min	Most practice sessions
Sprint	1 min	6 min	Experienced speakers; trust your template
Short drill	30 sec	2 min	Warm-up, one idea and one example only

Stay under the limit

Practice to finish a little before the limit and avoid trailing off into the grace period. In NSDA-style rounds a speaker who runs past the grace period cannot place first.

Quotes and sayings

PROMPT	TEMPLATE	ANGLE
"Practice makes progress."	PREP	Progress over perfection; sports or music example
"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."	Story, Lesson, Link	Tell about a first step you took
"Don't judge a book by its cover."	Three Reasons	Assumptions, missed talent, better habit
"Actions speak louder than words."	PREP	Trust built by behavior; team captain example
"Fall seven times, stand up eight."	Story, Lesson, Link	Resilience after a setback

Worked example: one prompt, start to finish

Prompt: "Actions speak louder than words." **Template:** PREP, with two examples.

PART	WHAT THE SPEAKER SAYS (OUTLINE)
Opening	One-sentence story of a teammate who stayed after practice to help a new player, then the prompt
Meaning	People believe what you do more than what you promise
Thesis	Trust is built by behavior, in teams and in friendships
Example 1	The teammate story: what she did, what the team felt afterward
Example 2	A family or classroom example of someone who kept a small promise every week
Conclusion	Return to the opening story, restate the prompt, end on one line: "Say less, show up more."

The outline fits on three lines of a notecard during practice, and each example should take roughly 30 to 60 seconds. Adjust to your own time plan.

Single words and objects

PROMPT	TEMPLATE	ANGLE
Bridges	Past, Present, Future	Literal bridges, then bridges between people
Maps	Three Reasons	Direction, perspective, discovery
Umbrella	Problem, Cause, Solution	Preparation and protection
Mirror	Story, Lesson, Link	Self-reflection and honesty
Clocks	Past, Present, Future	How we value time

Idea and opinion prompts

PROMPT	TEMPLATE	ANGLE
Should students choose some of their own classes?	Three Reasons	Motivation, responsibility, a limit or two
Is it better to be curious or confident?	Three Reasons	Argue one, concede the other, then combine
What makes a good teammate?	PREP	Listening, effort, support, with a sports or club example
Technology: more helpful or more distracting?	Problem, Cause, Solution	Name both sides, pick the solution
What would you invent to make school better?	Problem, Cause, Solution	Pick a real problem; describe the invention

Reminder

Prompts at real tournaments change by league and round. Use these only for practice; there is no official list.

Prompt types and how to handle them

TYPE	COMMON TRAP	FIX
Quotation	Retelling what the author meant	Say what it means to you, then prove it
Single word or object	Listing facts about the object	Turn it into an idea (a mirror becomes honesty)

TYPE	COMMON TRAP	FIX
Question	Giving both sides forever	Choose a side by the 30-second mark
Silly or lighthearted	Being random	Use a clear point wrapped in humor
Abstract idea	Staying vague	Anchor each point in a specific example

- ♦ **Build an example bank.** Keep a notebook of five stories from school, sports, books, history, and family that you can bend to many prompts.
- ♦ **Practice prep without speaking.** Prep a prompt in two minutes, say your thesis aloud, and move on to the next prompt. This builds speed.
- ♦ **Rotate templates.** Use each template at least twice a month so none feels new in a real round.

A four-week practice calendar

WEEK	FOCUS	SESSION IDEA
1	Meaning and thesis	Prep 6 prompts, say only the thesis
2	Examples	Give 3 speeches with two real examples each
3	Time control	Finish between 5:30 and 6:30 on a 7-minute plan
4	Delivery	Record two speeches, count fillers, retell with a pause instead

Scoring yourself

After each speech rate yourself from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong). Track progress over a month.

CATEGORY	SCORE 1 TO 5
Clear structure	
Spoke to the prompt	
Concrete example	
Delivery and pace	
Ending	

REFLECTION: ONE THING TO REPEAT, ONE TO CHANGE

Coaching note

Want a plan built around your speaker? Book a free consultation with Scholar Coach at the link below.

Built from public guidance: NSDA Impromptu Starter Kit · NSDA Competition Events Guide: Impromptu. Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

NOTES

Want a plan built around **your** debater?

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