



Time Required:
45 minutes,
3 times

Grade Level:
9-12th grades

Skills for the 21st Century Marketplace Activity

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“Off the Cuff” Activity

Infusionomics Themes, Keystone Economic Principles, and Skills for the 21st Century Marketplace:

- **THEME: CHOICES**
 - **Keystone Economic Principle™ #3:** All choices have consequences
- **THEME: RESOURCES**
 - 16. Communication Skills; a. Oral, Written, and Body Language; vi. Make oral presentations

** For additional standards and content references, please see the [end of document](#).

Overview:

In the Off the Cuff activity, students must speak for an allotted amount of time on a specific topic given to them moments before they begin talking.

- **Note:** It is recommended that you repeat this exercise 3 times on different days.
 - **First time:** just have the students complete the speaking exercise.
 - **Second time:** have the students do the speaking exercise and then go through the class discussion questions.
 - **Third time:** have the students do the speaking exercise and then tell each student at least one way that his/her communication skills have improved since the first time he/she did the exercise.

Objectives:

This activity will give the students a chance to practice their impromptu public speaking skills, improving their confidence to stand up in front of their peers and present information.

Materials and Handouts:


Topics written on index cards for each student in the classroom

- Topics should be ones familiar to your students (e.g., relevant fads, classroom subjects, community issues, etc.)
- Example topics include:
 - Descriptive Speeches (Use “Positive Statements”)
 - Explain how to use Facebook
 - Tell us about your summer plans
 - Give us an explanation of your favorite meal
 - Persuasive Speeches (Use “Normative Statements”)
 - What is your favorite holiday and why?
 - Tell us why school should be cancelled tomorrow

DAY ONE

Activity:

- Explain to the students that they will each be speaking in front of the class on a specific topic for 45 seconds. They will be given their topic as they come up to the front of the classroom. Encourage the student to talk continuously for the entire time.
- Ask for a volunteer student or draw names from a hat.
- Hand the student an index card with a topic on it. Give the student about 30 seconds to think about the topic, and then ask him/her to begin, giving him/her 45 seconds of talking time.
- Be sure to encourage and applaud each student after his/her speech, as this is an obviously difficult task.
- Variation: You can vary the difficulty of this activity by changing the amount of time, the topics, or by allowing them to do the speaking in pairs.

 If this is the first time you have done this activity with your class, STOP HERE and allow the students to think on their own about the activity.

DAY TWO

Conduct the activity again, following each of the steps in the “Activity” section above.


Writing Prompt or Class Discussion:

Here are some optional questions for writing prompts and/or class discussion.

- Questions on impromptu communication:
 - What does impromptu mean?
 - Were you able to organize your thoughts in your head before/as you were speaking?
 - What aspect(s) of this activity made it difficult?
 - If you were just talking with a friend about the topic, would this have been easier to do?
 - Why is it hard to get up in front of a group of people to speak?
- Questions on how this exercise applies to real life:
 - In our lives, do we ever have to give an impromptu talk about something? To our friends? Our parents? Our teachers?
 - Is it useful to be able to talk in front of a group of people?
 - Does practicing make this kind of activity easier?
 - When you think about what you want to do when you get out of school, will it involve talking to groups of people? Will it involve having to give an impromptu talk about a topic?

Tips/Suggestions for Students:

- Give the students suggestions for ways to improve their public speaking. Examples include:
 - Make eye contact with people in the audience.
 - Use appropriate gestures –
 - Do not stand with your hands at your side the entire time. Make gestures when appropriate in the speech.
 - Do not cross your arms, put your hands in your pockets, or wring your hands.
 - Before speaking, think of approximately 3 main points to cover in your speech.
 - Give a few sentences of introduction at the beginning of your speech and a few sentences of conclusion at the end of your speech.
 - Stay calm and relaxed.

 If this is the second time you have done this activity with your class, STOP HERE

DAY THREE

Conduct the activity again, following each of the steps in the “Activity” section above.

Feedback for Students:

- Give each student at least one way that his/her communication skills have improved since the first time he/she did the exercise. Allow the class to chime in if appropriate.

Writing Prompt or Class Discussion:

Here are some optional questions for writing prompts and/or class discussion.

- How do you think your speaking ability has improved since the first time you spoke in front of the class?
- How do you want to continue to improve? Give specific examples.

Additional Standards and Content References

Partnership for 21st Century Life Skills Concept:

- Learning and Innovation > Communication and Collaboration > Communicate Clearly

National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education:

- 16. Communication Skills; a. Oral, Written, and Body Language; vi. Make oral presentations

Keystone Economic Principles™:

- For more information: http://infusionomics.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Keystone_Cheat.pdf