



Not-So-Extemporaneous Speaking

Preparation is paramount for junior speakers.

Story & photos by **Raney Lovorn**, editorial intern

Extemporaneous literally means unprepared, but juniors should not let that stop them from laying some groundwork before the competition. A little advance preparation could mean a difference in placing and success in other speaking events. At the 2015 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Tulsa, Okla., junior speakers shared their best advice for making the extemporaneous speaking contest not so extemporaneous.

Practice makes perfect

Matt Rosman traveled 1,289 miles from Creston, Wash., to Tulsa for his very first NJAS experience. It was bigger and better than he ever imagined, he says. Although a novice at nationals, Rosman was prepared for public speaking

thanks to participating in an extemporaneous speaking competition at his school.

Rosman says his school contest taught him how to study ahead of time for extemporaneous speaking because teachers at the school allow the students to practice in the afternoons after school is out, sometimes months ahead of the contest.

“With the Angus contest I was a little bit more relaxed because I had more time to prepare,” Rosman says. “On the other hand, it was also more strenuous because I had to talk for a longer period of time than my school contest.”

For Rosman’s school competition, he would pick a topic and then have only one minute to prepare his speech.

In contrast, the NJAS competition allows juniors 30

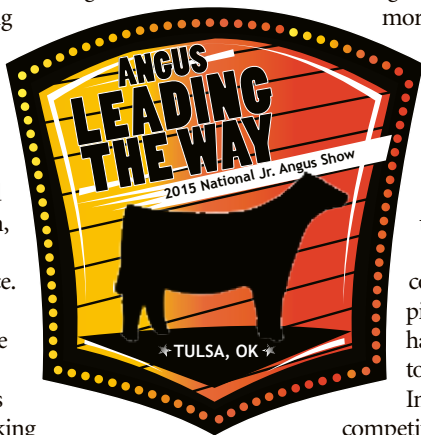
minutes (min.) to prepare before they speak.

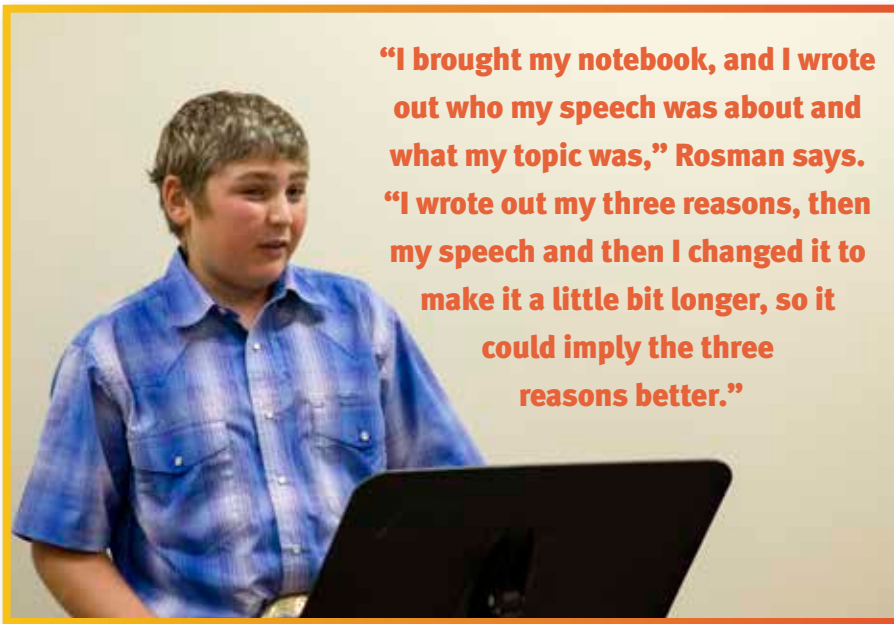
Practicing prepared or extemporaneous speaking prior to the contest could help calm a junior’s nerves, facilitate public speaking skills and create talking points for future speeches.

Stay up-to-date

Topics at the speaking contest always relate to the beef industry, and studying current agricultural events or beef industry information helps juniors develop a sound knowledge base. Madelyn Gerken, an intermediate speaker from Cashion, Okla., prefers to study relevant information prior to the contest and carries less information with her physically.

“I normally bring any *Angus Journal* magazines that we have, and any other Angus-based articles that I can find to bring with me,” Gerken says. “I do stay up to date on current industry information, and this year my topic was one that I can relate to, especially since I have grown up on a farm





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and have a cattle background.”

Gerken’s topic asked her to discuss the most important aspect in raising cattle, and she pulled more from her own personal knowledge to answer the question.

Write it out

Both Rosman and Gerken highlighted the fact that their strategy included writing out their speeches, although both had different reasons for using a written approach.

Rosman says he prefers to speak using a point system. He chooses a number of points he wishes to make and then expounds upon them. Writing down the speech helps him to organize his points.

For a speech on his role model, “I brought

my notebook, and I wrote out who my speech was about and what my topic was,” Rosman says. “I wrote out my three reasons, then my speech and then I changed it to make it a little bit longer, so it could imply the three reasons better.”

Gerken chooses to write out her speeches because physically seeing the speech in written form helps with her comprehension and memorization.

“I wrote down my speech just because it is much easier for me to memorize things when I have it written down and I can look at it,” Gerken says. “It took me about 15 minutes to decide what I wanted to say, and then after that I started to memorize.”



“Try to stay on top of what all is going on in the beef industry,” Gerken advises. “Try to sit down, memorize and present information that the judges will find interesting and useful.”

Take a breath

Extemporaneous speaking is intimidating because the contest appears to incorporate a lot of unknown elements — like the topic, judges and audience members. Preparing for the subject matter and knowing the contest room environment before the event can help tone down the speakers’ nerves.

“I was really nervous because I thought there would be a lot of people in the room,” Rosman says. “I thought there would be a lot of judges, and it would be kind of a big publicized event. I thought it would be a really big deal, but it was not nearly as bad as I thought.”

The fear of participating in extemporaneous speaking is often a driving factor when juniors choose not to compete in the contest. Taking a deep breath to help calm the nerves can be a good practice and could make the difference in a speaker’s entire demeanor.

Know your audience

A key to knowing the audience in extemporaneous speaking is remembering that the topics will pertain to industry information. With that in mind, it makes sense that the judges are beef industry professionals. The rooms are open for any visitors who want to watch, who are typically other NJAS participants. The audience is generally friendly and welcoming.

“Try to stay on top of what all is going on in the beef industry,” Gerken advises. “Try to sit down, memorize and present information that the judges will find interesting and useful.”

Actually knowing the information presented is a key in knowing the audience, because if industry information is fabricated, the professional judges will immediately recognize it. Never fear, that’s where the time preparing before the contest comes in handy.

Have fun

The NJAS is a welcoming and exciting place for juniors to learn and grow. Having fun and learning more about the industry is the purpose of the educational events as a whole. Embrace the time spent with friends and family, rather than giving in to stress. Extemporaneous speaking doesn’t have to come with anxiety, especially with a little preparation. Don’t be afraid to enjoy the experience.

