

Table Tactics -- Table Topics Made Easy!

Mr. Sherwood Jones - DTM

There are three common types of Table Topics questions Asking about something from your past

Asking your opinion Asking you to be creative

There are two major steps in formulating a response to the question -- • Gather the raw material

- Determine organization & format of response **STEP ONE: GATHER THE RAW MATERIAL**

Something from your past -

Has this happened to me, or if not, perhaps to a friend or family member? How did this happen, step by step? How did it make you feel? What were the consequences or lessons learned?

Asking your opinion -

What do I think or feel about this? Why? How did I come to this conclusion or attitude? Is this a popular view? Should it be?

Asking you to be creative -

Does this remind me of a story or movie I know? • Can I pull from that?

- What if anything were possible? **STEP TWO: CHOOSE YOUR ORGANIZATION**

Organize it into intro, body, and conclusion - viewpoint statement, followed by supporting fact

If you have enough to say on a subject, you could go for the standard open... three points... conclusion.

Make a "teaser statement" or indirect answer up front that makes the audience want to listen further. This could allude to the direct answer that will arise later in the speech, or it could be shockingly direct such that they will want to then hear how you got to your viewpoint. ("Brussel Sprouts destroyed my life." "My world ended at age 12, or so I thought.")

If you are having trouble coming to a clear answer up front, then begin by acknowledging this: "The question of gun control is very perplexing - a double-edged sword..." You could present the speech as a story. Too often, people state the moral of the story first, then back up to tell the story. Take a lesson from Aesop's Fables. Jump into the story first and let the moral unfold at its conclusion.

You could be very inventive - for example, you could make a third person question about your cat be answered with a story narrated by your cat. Perhaps you could best illustrate a point through a parable of your own making. (But don't tell them you're going to tell them a story, just start telling it!)

DO !

Answer the question. Make the speech sound like a standalone speech, as if no question had been asked. Maintain eye contact. Have the courage to use a period - end a sentence, start another. Answer everyone else's question in your head.

DON'T !

Don't make your speech sound like a response to a question Don't open with the word "Well..." Don't ask to have the question repeated Don't repeat the question yourself Don't refer to how much time you have left Don't say you don't know much about the subject Don't end your Table Topics with "thank you."

TIPS FOR TOPICMASTERS

Call on members who are not on the agenda first... ..then lesser functionaries (ah counter, grammarian, timekeeper) ...then offer a chance to guests ...then major functionaries (evaluators, Toastmaster, Gen Eval).

Ask the question first, THEN call the victim's name.

(2) Tinseltown Toastmasters allow a previous question to be answered if current question is a problem - OUR GOAL IS TO HAVE YOU MAKE THE TIME.