

ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 12

Advocacy Skill Drills

To become an effective advocate, it is important to get comfortable speaking spontaneously, with little to no preparation before you have to offer an opinion or stance. Spontaneous speaking skills take practice to build the muscles you need to process ideas quickly and respond on the spot.

Practice Area	Example Drill
1. Practice stating opinions on the spot.	Look up controversial debate topics by searching “moral debate topics”, “extemporaneous debate topics”, or “argumentative writing prompts” (like the New York Times list of prompts). Choose any prompt and set a timer for 1 minute while you offer a response to that prompt with no preparation. This works even better with a partner or as a car activity with others. This drill gets easier with practice over time, especially when combined with doing research and reading on a variety of topics to stay on top of current debates.
2. Practice offering suggestions and proposing ideas.	Have someone pose a problem that needs a solution -- this can be an example from real life, a typical issue in the workplace, or a hypothetical dilemma you might encounter. If working alone, write down real-world problems onto slips of paper and put them in a bag. Set a timer for 30 seconds and practice explaining solutions for each problem with positive, constructive language. For a fun twist, pose ridiculous, fantastical scenarios and practice trying to “solve” them.
3. Practice justifying statements.	<p>Justification involves explaining your process and/or decisions and how they result in something beneficial. They most typically involve explaining a problem/driver/need, then a solution (including action, timeline, cost, people involved), and the result.</p> <p>For practice, have someone pose a binary choice (i.e. something or something?). An easy example is something like “Drive to our destination or Take a Lyft?” or “Eat out for dinner or cook at home?” Practice picking an option and then explaining your decision in a short 30-second justification. Again, you can do this on your own by putting prompts in a bag.</p>
4. Practice speaking up for someone and inviting other voices into the conversation.	In everyday life, make it a goal to make sure people are included. Look out for perspectives that aren’t represented and invite others to contribute (without putting them on the spot if they don’t want to speak). Use phrases like, “But who wouldn’t benefit from this action?” or “What other opinions aren’t represented?”

