

Christian Communicators of the Southeast

FINDING A GREAT ORIGINAL ADVOCACY TOPIC

Pick something you feel strongly about. If you do not feel strongly about your topic, how are you going to persuade the audience to feel the same way? Students sometimes say, "But I don't feel strongly about anything!" Yes you do. Sit down with a piece of paper and brainstorm. If you like baseball, give a speech for or against salary caps. If you like country music, give a speech on why country music is not as simplistic or sappy as many people think. You get the idea.

Avoid your "hot button" topics--something you feel too strongly about. Hot button topics are issues you feel so strongly about that it is hard for you to understand where the other side is coming from. In order to understand why others have not yet embraced your opinion or perspective you need to understand the other point of view.

Pick something controversial. It does not have to be extremely controversial, but you do need to present a topic that not everyone agrees with. Otherwise it will not be a very engaging speech. For example, do not give a speech on why smoking is bad for your health; who is going to disagree with that? Instead, try giving a speech for or against a county-wide smoking ban.

Avoid "tired topics" that students pick all the time and that your judges have heard over and over again. Yawn. Be creative. Here is a list of tired speaking topics that you probably want to avoid:

- Health care reform.
- Illegal immigration.
- Homeschooling.
- Abolishing abortion.

There is nothing wrong with advocating for a controversial topic, but these have been overused big time.

Pick a current event. Having trouble thinking of a topic? Go read some blogs, *The Economist* or *World Magazine*. What's going on in the world? If there is an election, endorse a candidate or a ballot referendum.

Are there ideas, causes or issues that people need to ponder or take action on, but most people rarely do? Wake up some passion in your audience with an issue with daily relevance to them.

Talk about cell phone use in public, or music downloads, tax holidays, or something the audience cares about. If they do not care about your issue, they will not be interested in understanding why you care about it.

Pick a smaller part of a big issue. Do not try to change people's mind about a huge issue in your short speech, because you cannot. Think you can change someone's mind about the Iraq war in a 6-8 minute speech? Of course not. However, you might change their minds about a portion of this issue, such as the timing of troop withdrawals.

Here is a tip about finding a great topic: have fun. Find speech topics and essay topics that you would enjoy working with. It is much easier to engage your judges' interests if you are advocating for an idea, product, person or issue that truly interests you!

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POPULAR CULTURE TOPICS

Reality television as a positive or negative cultural phenomenon
Makeover shows
Disney films
Illegal music downloading
Role-playing games (RPGs)
Violence in movies
Television, movie, music, or video game ratings
Twitter and Facebook as a cultural phenomenon
The effect of cell phone use on society
The effect of iPods on society
The amount of television and other media used by children
Advertising in the public schools
Advertising that targets children
Alcohol or cigarette advertising
Requirements for children's educational programming
Public radio/public television
Halloween

SPORTS TOPICS

Salary caps for professional athletes
Sports and steroid use
Funding issues for women's sports
Publicity for women's sports
Professional athletic strikes
Drafting of athletes out of high school
The rising price of tickets to professional games
Public funding of professional stadiums
Academic expectations of college athletes
College sports recruitment practices
The benefit of team sports to children
Athletes as role models
Violence and sports (hockey, boxing, etc.)
The commercialization of sports
Youth athletic participation in sports like gymnastics and figure skating

PEOPLE

President Barack Obama
My unforgettable grandparent
Mother Theresa
Missionary heroes
Pope John Paul
World's Best Musical Composer