

Be a Smart and Savvy Speaker with the Rule of Three

The Rule of Three is a favorite technique for presenters, actors, comedians, singers, writers and business people because it is technically, mentally, and emotionally effective.

On the technical side, you visually see a pattern in a group of three. Conscious interpretations have us believe:

1. The first occurrence is by chance.
2. The second occurrence is considered a coincidence.
3. The third occurrence is perceived as a pattern.



While you *visually* see a pattern with a group of three, mentally your brain detects a pattern with only two occurrences. Your mind completes the comparison process between 1 and 2 and begins to calculate 3 as part of a pattern. You will leverage normal mental anticipation to help create a memorable moment.

The Rule of Three is used in language and drives how you think and make sense of information to form a satisfying conclusion to emotionally settle your mind and heart.

For example:



1.



2.



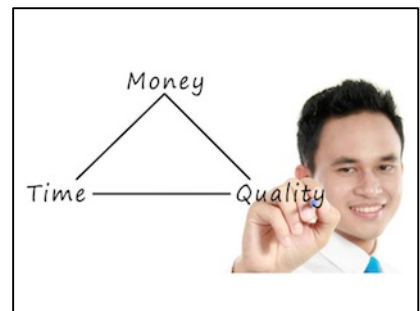
3.



4.



5.



6.

Be a Smart and Savvy Speaker with the Rule of Three

The real magic happens when you can use The Rule of Three to help organize your thoughts.

This workshop is all about The Rule of Three and how you can apply it to:

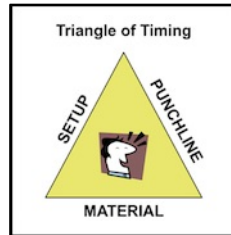
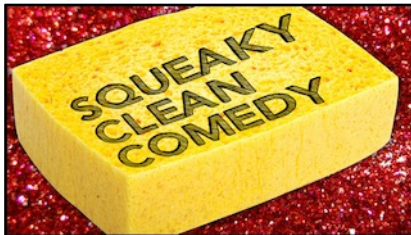
1. Impromptu Speaking

- Improve your manner of speaking to be calm, clear, and concise.
- Enhance your ability to tell a complete impromptu answer with a beginning, middle, end.
- Present a better picture (story) by selecting the appropriate nouns, verbs, and adjectives.



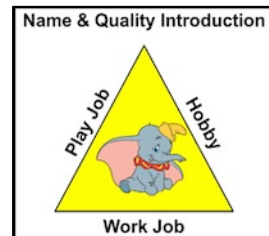
2. Home-Run Humor

- Tell jokes that are easy to remember (clever clean comedy).
- Gain more laughs when you apply purpose, pace, and...pause.
- Discover that how easy it is to be funny with proper material, setup, and punchline.



3. Quality Introductions

- Apply to past, present, and future Toastmasters speeches.
- Deliver engaging introductions at business meetings, elevator pitches, and parties.
- Make yourself memorable to others (i.e. bosses, celebrities, or future spouse).

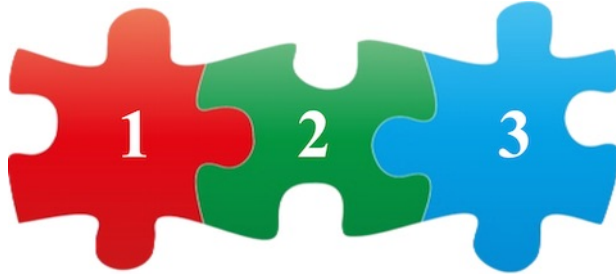


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Workshop Facilitator: [Michael Varma](#), DTM

Table Topics (and the Rule of Three)



To prevent your mind from going blank, apply one of the half dozen Rule of Three options listed to your right.

Each grouping can be used for Table Topics or applied to business questions or telling personal stories.

Use one short sentence for each word and you'll have a complete response with a beginning, middle, and end.

To lengthen your answer, add a second or third succinct sentence for each word in the grouping.

Add your own Rule of Three then decide on which is your personal favorite (you can like more than one ☺).

	Sentence 1	Sentence 2	Sentence 3
1.	Before	During	After
2.	Child	Teenager	Adult
3.	Past	Present	Future
4.	Plan	Implement	Review
5.	Goal	Action	Result
6.	Worst	Better	Best
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			

Examples: What did you do for New Year's Eve?

- Sentence 1:** Before New Year's Eve I went to the store and bought party supplies.
- Sentence 2:** During New Year's Eve my wife and I watched Dick Clark's Rockin' Eve show.
- Sentence 3:** After New Year's Eve we fell asleep on our couch.

- Sentence 1:** As a child, I tried to stay away until midnight, but I never made it.
- Sentence 2:** As a teenager, I seemed to stay up till the week hours of the morning chatting with friends.
- Sentence 3:** As an adult, I make it to midnight then promptly went to bed by 12:05 am.

- Sentence 1:** My goal, was to keep myself busy in the kitchen so the time would "whisk" away.
- Sentence 2:** The actions I took were go to the store and buy the ingredients then start cooking.
- Sentence 3:** As a result, midnight came and I celebrated with a warm and gooey chocolate chip cookie.

One of the easiest ways to enhanced your response is to use . (hint answer on next page)

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The best storytellers, lawyers, and winners of Toastmasters speech contests use descriptive words (adjectives) to paint a picture in the mind of their listeners.

“Where did you park your car?”

Answer Options:



- Good:** “Over there.” – with pointing gesture.
2 words; 1.5 seconds
- Better:** “I parked my red car over there.”
7 words; 2.5 seconds; better answer
- Best:** “I parked my red car next to the silver truck.”
10 words; 3.0 seconds; best answer

Advanced Speaker (and Writer) Tips:

1. Use adjectives that paint a picture in your listener’s mind.
 - a. Appeal to the senses (see, hear, feel, smell, taste).
 - b. Pick one or two primary senses for the situation.
2. Use dynamic verbs that convey actions or emotions.
 - a. He ate dinner. – stative verb example
 - b. He devoured dinner. – dynamic verb example
3. Use descriptive words to ground and engage listeners.
 - a. Exposition – Sets the scene and grounds audience.
 - b. Dialogue – Best way to engage audience.

DESCRIPTIVE WORDS			
Large big colossal enormous gigantic huge massive substantial tremendous	Fast accelerated active agile brisk nimble quick speedy swift	Said asked called exclaimed remarked replied responded stated told	Hard challenging complicated demanding grueling puzzling rigid tough tricky
Happy blissful cheerful delighted elated glad jolly jovial joyful	Kind benevolent considerate courteous helpful loving patient sweet thoughtful	Small diminutive little miniature minute petite teeny tiny wee	Walk hike march pace saunter shuffle stroll strut wander
Funny amusing comical entertaining gleeful hilarious humorous whimsical witty	Easy apparent carefree effortless manageable obvious simple snap uncomplicated	Run dart dash jog race rush scamper scurry sprint	Sad dejected depressed disheartened forlorn gloomy glum joyless unhappy

Home-Run Humor: Delivery (and the Rule of Three – Part 1 of 3)

Humor often allows you to connect faster with your audience than your core message is more easily accepted. Successful presenters use the effective delivery technique known as The Three Ps of Telling a Joke: **Purpose, Pace** and...**Pause**.

Purpose

Tell origami jokes to a table of lawyers and you might get sued, but share judicial jokes with your legal beagles and they will file funny in your favor. **Match your jokes with the crowd's subject** and the laughs will be longer, louder and more legitimate. And after your joke hits a high note, tell the audience the most important thing you want them to remember because, *"After the laughter comes the height of listening."* - [Jeffrey Gitomer](#).

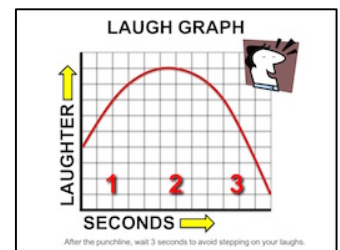


Pace

A good joke takes **less time** to tell and receives **more laughs** when you keep a clear and steady pace. **The rhythm of the joke prepares the audience for an expected line.** When an **unexpected** (punch)line is substituted, you've achieved *The Laughter Factor*.

Pause

When telling a joke, don't pause for effect; **pause for the audience to reflect.** Every person listening needs time to absorb and process what you said. If you start your next joke too soon or run to sit down, you will "step" on your laughs and spoil the fun of the joke. Pause for three seconds *after* the punchline. Stand calm and confident and welcome the well-deserved whoops.



When you use humor effectively you'll be able to attract and retain the audience's interest and emphasize key points in your presentation. Your spectators will remember you and your subject matter making the perfect win-win scenario.

Resources:

1. www.HumorMasters.com – Receive support from a local specialty Toastmasters club dedicated to using humor in speeches. How many laughs per minute can you score?
2. [Humorously Speaking](#) – Learn how to incorporate jokes, anecdotes, and emphasize points in your next presentation. Toastmasters International Item #2260.
3. *The Comedy Bible* by Judy Carter – Provides step-by-step instructions to help readers develop, refine, sell or perform their work.

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Home-Run Humor: Diagram (and the Rule of Three – Part 2 of 3)

Analyzing humor is like dissecting a frog: few people are interested, and the frog dies. But you'll get more laughs when you understand the three key components required to tell a good joke. The Triangle of Timing diagrams the winning formula: **Material**, **Setup**, and **Punchline**.

Material

Ever told a funny joke and nobody laughed? They didn't laugh because there was no common ground for them to be engaged. Provide a quick, firm foundation and **describe the scene** with vivid words so the audience envisions the situation.

Setup

The longer it takes to tell a joke the smaller the laughs. Keep your setup short and succinct. **Share only relevant material** that affects the punchline. Omit needless words and explanations: Only the germane shall remain.

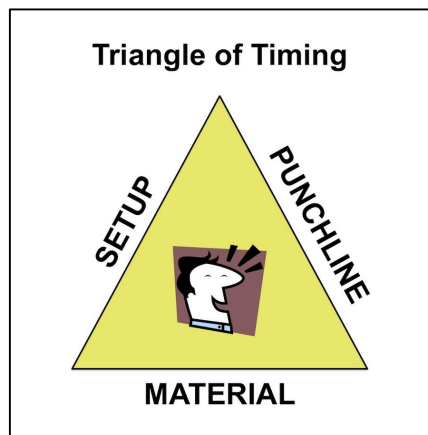
Punchline

Present with confidence. Then pause. **Give the audience time to digest what you said**. Imagine your words flying through the air and entering their brains. It takes about three beats: hear, understand, comprehend - then the laughter ignites, clear and bright.

Every time you tell a joke you'll learn when the laughs come. Then you can enhance your delivery for the next time. Practice really does make perfect.

Examples of classic Rule of Three jokes:

- Las Vegas wedding packages have everything you will need; music, flowers, a divorce document.
- To be a successful speaker you need three bones: wish bone, back bone, and a funny bone.
- I got my first bikini and it's a three piece: It's a top, a bottom, and a blindfold for you.
- There are only three things women need in life: food, water, and compliments.
- My wife's an angel – she's always up in the air, always harping on something and never has anything to wear.
- If you want to be seen—stand up!
If you want to be heard—speak up!
If you want to be appreciated—shut up!



Home-Run Humor: Design (and the Rule of Three – Part 3 of 3)

You can easily design your own Home-Run Humor on any subject when you follow the winning formula and format.

Formula

A joke's structure includes a brief sentence (material) that provides a common foundation, a succinct pattern (setup) and a direct delivery (punchline).

Format

1. Select your subject for your brief material sentence.
2. Listing 10 Real and 10 Unexpected answers for your subject.
3. Fill in 2 Real and 1 Unexpected words in the subject sentence.

The human brain only needs a sequence of two to recognize a pattern then it will expect a third to continue the series. When the third item in the list is unexpected the brain triggers laughter.

Tips for creating “unexpected” words: choose the exact opposite or a complete exaggeration of the real term.

Funny

To win a speech contest you need a good story, a good delivery, and a Russian Hacker!

(Real) (Real) (Unexpected)

REAL

1. Humor
2. Strategy
3. Story
4. Emotion
5. Props
6. Gestures
7. Vocal Variety
8. Call to Action
9. Delivery
10. Authenticity


UNEXPECTED

1. Nudity
2. Bribe
3. Gun
4. Plagiarize
5. Muppets
6. Puppy
7. Kitten
8. Bulldozer
9. Russian Hacker
10. Mime routine

Design your own joke:

To win a speech contest you need _____, _____, and _____!

(Real) (Real) (Unexpected)



The Rule of Three

To win a speech contest you need
<----- Material ----->
_____, _____, and
<--- Setup ---> **PUNCHLINE!**


More Winning Formats

- A. Real / Real / Unexpected
- B. Ordinary / Ordinary / Ridiculous
- C. Same / Same / Opposite
- D. Legal / Legal / Illegal
- E. Fact / Fact / Absurd
- F. Real / Real / Fake

Design Your Own Joke Template

1. Select a subject

- To win a speech contest you need...
- To be a good leader you need...
- To advance at work you need...
- To _____ you need...
- To _____ you need...
- To _____ you need...



The Rule of Three

To win a speech contest you need
<----- Material ----->

_____, _____, and
<---- Setup ----> PUNCHLINE!

2. List 10 _____ and 10 _____

- | | | |
|-----|-------|-------|
| 1. | _____ | _____ |
| 2. | _____ | _____ |
| 3. | _____ | _____ |
| 4. | _____ | _____ |
| 5. | _____ | _____ |
| 6. | _____ | _____ |
| 7. | _____ | _____ |
| 8. | _____ | _____ |
| 9. | _____ | _____ |
| 10. | _____ | _____ |

More Winning Formats

- A. Real / Real / Unexpected
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- E. Fact / Fact / Absurd
- F. Real / Real / Fake

3. Fill in 2 words from first column and 1 word from the second column complete the sentence:

Example: To win a speech contest you need a good story, a good delivery, and a Russian Hacker!
(Real) (Real) (Unexpected)

To win a speech contest you need _____, _____, and _____!

To be a good leader you need _____, _____, and _____!

To advance at work you need _____, _____, and _____!

To _____ you need _____, _____, and _____!

To _____ you need _____, _____, and _____!

To _____ you need _____, _____, and _____!

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Quality Introductions (and the Rule of Three)

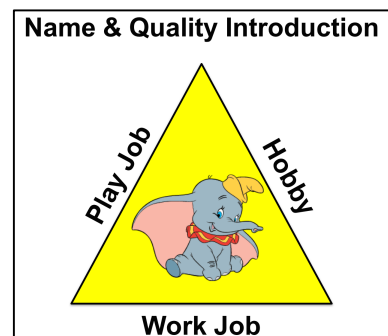
It's a well proven fact that people remember the first and last thing you say...except for introductions. Friendships and business deals can fall flat when you fail to remember their name. What should you do?

- When you meet, greet, and repeat a person's name you'll increase your chances of remembering their name by 10%.
- When you ask for their business card, gaze at their name and other facts then you'll increase your chances of remembering their name by 40%.
- When you receive a quality introduction with the Rule of Three you **associate the person's name with what they like to do** and your chances of remembering their name increase by more than 90%.



Easy way to make a memorable moment, and encourage reciprocation, is to:

1. Extract your name into a separate sentence.
2. Use the Rule of Three format for your quality introduction.
3. Prepared a pronunciation prompter, slogan, or motto.



Formula

A standard introduction has a succinct pattern (Rule of Three) includes your Name, Title, and Company.

"Hello my name is Michael Varma, Owner of Magical Concepts."

A quality introduction extracts the name into a separate sentence then uses the Rule of Three.

"Hello my name is Michael Varma. I am a magician, author, and numbers nerd."

- ✓ This second intro opens the door to three unique conversations which will make me memorable.
- ✓ If they have trouble enunciating my last name I can offer a rhyme, *"I'm the Varma with the Karma."*
- ✓ If they don't automatically reciprocate then I have instant conversation starters:
 - What is your work job (profession – what you do for money)?
 - What is your play job (enjoyment – what you would do if you had too much money)?
 - What is your hobby (associating their name with what they like to do)?

Ready to make your own quality introduction? Turn to the next page.

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Format

1. Select your desired introduction format.

Standard Introduction Format			Quality Introduction Format		
A	B	C	A	B	C
Name	Title	Company	Function	Function	Value
Name	Profession	Function	Work Job	Play Job	Hobby
Name	Department	Function	Head	Head	Heart

2. Listing 10 answers for word in the grouping.

	A	B	C
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

3. Fill in your name then select one words from each column to complete the next sentence.

Standard Introduction

Hello, my name is _____, _____, with/and I _____.
(Column A) (Column B) (Column C)

Quality Introduction

1. Hello, my name is _____.
(Your Name)

2. I am a _____, _____, with/and I _____.
(Column A) (Column B) (Column C)

3. To help you remember my name, “_____.”

After you master the foundational speech introduction from Toastmasters (Speech Objectives, Speech Title, and Speaker’s Name) then you can deliver an engaging opening when you follow the three Cs of a quality introduction: content, context and credibility (See *Toastmasters Magazine* article next page).

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HOW TO

By Michael Varma, ACG, ALB

The 3 Cs of a quality introduction:
Content, context and credibility.

Rx for a Good Speech Introduction



This guy who's coming to the podium – you gotta keep your eye on him. He'll make your wallet disappear. Please welcome Michael Varma."

Yes, this is a true Hall of Shame introduction I received years ago. It was horrendous on so many levels. It made me sound like a pick-pocket – but it gets worse. I was speaking before local businessmen asking for *donations*, to fund *Friends of the Garden* – a nonprofit project to teach elementary school children how to grow a vegetable garden.

My introducer had neglected to explain that I was a professional magician. Before my presentation, he had told me a story backstage of how another magician, about 10 years ago, magically stole his wallet as part of a comedy routine. His incomplete reminiscence at the lectern effectively killed my credibility. I had to take valuable time away from my original purpose to clarify his comments, then suitably re-introduce myself.

A fitting introduction, tailored to the topic of this article, would be, "*Ladies and gentlemen, our next guest is a professional entertainer and keynote speaker who over the last 25 years has performed and witnessed introductions ranging from spectacular to shocking. He will tell us how to avoid the Hall of Shame and provide an exclusive look into the secrets of giving an inspiring*

and dynamic introduction. Please welcome to the stage..."

Interested to know the speaker's name? Curious about what secrets will be revealed? Then my 30-second intro did a good job. It was successful because it contained the three Cs of a quality introduction: content, context and credibility.

Content: A brief, succinct sentence describing what you plan to talk about establishes a connection with the audience. Have your introducer include an interesting and attention-grabbing fact to pique your audience's interest for the next C: context.

Context: Explaining *why* the topic is timely or important to the listeners will help solidify the bond between the speaker and the audience. This persuasive sentence grants the presenter full access to engage each participant, putting you – the speaker – exactly where you want to be.

Credibility: People want to learn from experts. A medical student wants to learn from an experienced, successful doctor, not the appliance repairman. A concise sentence stating your credentials is sufficient.

Occasionally I'm asked, "But what if the speaker has several degrees and awards?" Best recommendation: Pick only two or three to be mentioned. Select the pertinent accolades for the subject mat-

ter and match it to the audience, because in most cases less is more.

Limiting each component (content, context and credibility) to one sentence provides the perfect intro length of 30 to 60 seconds.

Format

For basic introductions, keeping the Cs in order (1-2-3) creates a crescendo before announcing the performer's name, which is the natural cue to step up to the microphone. Ultimately, the type of event and the emcee's level of experience will dictate the order of the three Cs.

I like the 3-2-1 format for wedding and anniversary parties. You may ask, "If it's obvious you're at a wedding reception, is it still necessary to cover the content, context and credibility?"

Yes, for several reasons. It notifies the audience and speaker what's next on the agenda, provides a natural segue, and best of all, takes less than 10 seconds to say. For example: "The best man, Stephen Varma, the groom's brother, will say a few words and lead the guests in a toast to the newlyweds." Non-family members and their guests will know the who, what, where, when and why.

Reality check

Books on party protocol preach that the master of ceremonies will contact the performer and find out the following information: the speaker's

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◀ Learning from the experts: 2007-2008 International President Chris Ford introduces Golden Gavel recipient Pamela Wallin at the International Convention in Calgary in August.

name and correct pronunciation (spelled phonetically if necessary), the speaker's title (CEO, CFO, President, etc.), the speaker's bona fides (Dr., Ph.D., etc.) and the title of the speech. In truth, I've rarely received any such call. Waiting for the phone to ring can lead to disaster. I submit into evidence another one of my Hall of Shame introductions:

"H-e-e-r-e's Michael!"

While I appreciate being raised to the legendary ranks of Letterman, Leno, Carson and other one-name icons, it was an inappropriate intro-

duction to a group of elementary school children waiting to learn about earthquake safety. If kids know these late-night talk show hosts, then we have an explanation for the country's dismal test scores.

Essentials

Most professional presenters, myself included, know the power of a proper introduction. A careless, haphazard, off-the-cuff intro can destroy the immediate connection needed to engage your audience. So instead of waiting for a non-

existent phone call from the person who might introduce me, I actively do the following:

- Create a well-crafted introduction printed in a large 24-point font (so it can be easily read).
- E-mail or fax copies in advance to the contact person for the event.
- Arrive early and locate the person making the introductions.
- Provide another copy of the intro and have it read out loud until we're both satisfied.

If you follow the three Cs of a quality introduction – content, context and credibility – and learn from my experience, you'll avoid the Hall of Shame and guarantee yourself a warm welcome from your audience. 📌

Michael Varma, ACG, ALB, is a member of BergenMeisters Toastmasters club in Orange, California. He can be reached at www.michaelvarma.com.

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