

# RiMUN2011

**Lesson I**  
Public speaking



**RADBOUD INTERNATIONAL  
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# LESSON I: PUBLIC SPEAKING

## Why is Public Speaking difficult?

From when we are young, we learn to be specialists in conversational techniques and that is how we spend most our talking lives. Conversation is natural to human beings. This is why we feel uncomfortable speaking in public – it is an unnatural experience. It is important therefore to distinguish between characteristics of conversation and public speaking.

## Sounds of Silence - is it not weird to have long pauses when speaking?

People “um” and “er” when they speak naturally. They are considered ‘voiced pauses’. When speaking in public, using “um” and “er” sounds like you are hesitant, lacking in confidence, and badly prepared.

## How do I prevent myself from making these noises?

In public speaking, it is very important to learn how to ‘pause with purpose’:

Pausing and pace: punctuating speech with more frequent and longer silences than is normal in conversation helps audiences by breaking the flow of ideas into short, digestible units. This has the added advantage of helping you to slow down and keep your breathing under control.

Pausing and meaning: regular pausing also allows you to change the meaning and dramatic impact or mode of your statement.

If you read the following sentence aloud, pausing at the end of each of the three lines below, the sentence should read that the opposition is attacking the government:

The government  
Said the opposition  
Has completely lost its way.

Change where you pause, and it sounds like a government attack on the opposition:

The government said  
The opposition has completely lost its way.

Pausing for effect: Pausing can also alter the dramatic impact of sentences.

Example: Martin Luther King ‘I Have A Dream’ Speech”

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick-sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

In delivering it, he actually paused 9 times, at the end of each of the following lines:

We have also come to this hallowed spot  
To remind America of the fierce urgency of Now.  
This is no time  
To engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism.  
Now is the time  
To make real the promises of democracy.  
Now is the time  
To rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice.  
Now is the time,  
To lift our nation from the quick-sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

Now is the time,  
To make justice a reality for all of God's children.

Pausing To Recover: being aware that pauses that sound normal to audiences is a useful resource for people who worry about what to do if words suddenly fail them and they find themselves drying up on the middle of a speech. Pausing can be used in such circumstances to recover your thoughts and avoid ‘ums’ and ‘ers’.

### **How do I prevent myself from sounding boring?**

A commonly heard complaint from audiences is that a speaker just droned on and on. The word ‘drone’ refers to a continuous and unchanging stream of sound and highlights the fact that speaking in a monotone is widely regarded as a bad thing. It is therefore important to be clear about how tonal variation plays a positive part in the communication process.

Intonation and Meaning: stress: as a general guide, there will be at least one word in every sentence that needs some extra stress. Sometimes, as in the following example, there can be as many different meanings as there are words in the sentence:

#### Sentence with stress on a different word

*I* didn't say you stole my red hat.  
*I* *didn't* say you stole my red hat.  
I didn't *say* you stole my red hat.  
I didn't say *you* stole my red hat.  
I didn't say you *stole* my red hat.  
I didn't say you stole *my* red hat.  
I didn't say you stole my *red* hat.  
I didn't say you stole my red *hat*.

#### Different implied meanings

But someone else might have said it.  
I deny that I said it.  
I may have thought or implied it.  
I said someone else stole it.  
I said you did something else with it.  
I said you stole someone else's red hat.  
I said you stole my green hat.  
I said you stole my red scarf.

Key Tip: when using a script, it is a good idea to go through it and underline or highlight words that are to be delivered with extra emphasis.

Tone: variations in tone can also make a big difference to how we interpret what we hear. Depending on how we say it, a sentence like ‘he spoke for well over an hour’ can sound like a statement of fact, a compliment, a complaint or a question.

Intonation and Mood: changes in intonation and stress are extremely important for conveying irony, humor, passion, conviction, and enthusiasm. The danger of speaking in a normal conversational tone is that the speech will flatten out to a monotone by the time it reaches the audience.

Thus, you need to exaggerate your everyday conversational patterns to avoid sounding monotonous. The fact that public speaking requires us to exaggerate our usual conversational pattern of speaking probably explains why so many people find it more difficult and inhibiting to speak to an audience that includes people they know well.

### **What is the key thing to remember when speaking in public?**

The key thing to remember is, that only by speaking, can you initiate change. Above all, always try to speak and get your point across as much as possible.

This was the first of our Perfect RiMUN Delegate™ Series. While the information provided here covers some of the science behind effective public speaking, key to your success is practice, practice, practice.