

- keep introductions and conclusions short and to the point (roughly between one-fifth and one-tenth of the overall speech for each)

The most important part of effective internal timing is to be realistic.

Like handling external timing, managing internal timing comes with practice. As your sense of structure improves, your speech comes to fit the time. As it does so, it's tempting to digress and take advantage of what feels like a greater leeway. Don't do it. Stick to the structure. Avoid digressions; ignore anything that isn't actually aimed at either proving your case or disproving that of the other side.

SENSING TIME

The poet Rudyard Kipling suggests that "If you can fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run" then the world would be yours for the taking. That may be something of an exaggeration, but trying to do so certainly helps a lot with the timing of a debate speech. Breaking down the allotted time into its component parts and allocating a function to virtually every second is the key to effective timing—internal and external. As the seconds tick by, you need a sense of when to move on, and this requires getting a feel for how long a spoken minute is.

Good speakers instinctively know this. It's different from how a minute feels when someone is reading aloud, watching TV, sitting in class, or waiting for a bus. It's an important tool in the debating toolkit and is worth making an effort to develop the skill. Some speakers practice talking aloud while a friend times them, others record what they think feels like a minute and then check the recording with a stopwatch.

It's also useful before a debate to arrange a series of time signals with a teammate for the entire speech, but it's particularly worth agreeing on one for "STOP NOW." In most debates, the chair of the debate, a timekeeper, or an adjudicator will give time signals, but it's helpful to have a teammate supplementing that in case you just don't hear the final bell.

Conclusion

Almost all novice debaters initially struggle with speaking for the right length of time but, fairly quickly, they have that problem licked and stop thinking about timing altogether. It's now standard to use the stopwatch on a cell phone and start it when the adjudicator gives you the nod to get going. When the 7:00 comes up on the screen, the debater