

wraps up and moves back toward her chair, and everyone is happy, right? The problem is that the story doesn't end there. A speech isn't a race; the objective isn't to struggle over the finish line and then soak up the adulation of the crowd.

Instead, you can use the time limits, both the external ones imposed by the rules and the internal ones imposed by yourself, to refine and clarify what you say. It isn't just a case of finding enough material to fill, for example, 60 seconds of rebuttal. Instead, the challenge is to find the best available material, evidence, and arguments that are completely appropriate to the situation and then work out how to fit them in to the available time. Doing so shouldn't require speaking faster but thinking smarter. How can you say more with fewer words? What's the shortest distance between two ideas that still does justice to them both? How can you ensure that you are understood by the listener in the available time, your idea expressed with perfect clarity but without a word too many or too few?

Timing is simply the means by which we punctuate our speeches, giving them shape and meaning. However, first things first. Get the feel for the length of a minute, the sense of how much is too much of any given part, and then work to make the time fit what you have to say—not the other way around.

EXERCISES

- A. Watch speeches from finals and semi-final of competitions (WS, Asians, BP) and pay attention to how speakers use their first and last minutes.
- B. Practice speaking for a minute—it doesn't much matter what you're taking about—to get a sense of how long a minute is.
- C. Practice filling the time in your speeches by dividing your speech using the following guidelines:

introduction: 1 minute

rebuttal: 1.5 minutes

arguments: 3.5 minutes (90 seconds for one, 60 for the next, 30 for the third)

conclusion: 1 minute

If you run out of material, wait until you're meant to start the next part and begin from there. Work toward having no gaps. The silences may feel excruciating, but this technique will help you get used to speaking for the longer period.