

Speaking Drills

Debaters use speaking drills to improve their delivery. Included in this activity are some speaking drills that you can do at home to work on clarity and breath control. If you have trouble pronouncing words and speaking coherently in round, work on the drills for clarity. If you have trouble regulating your breathing while speaking and have to stop to take breaths too often, work on the drills for breath control. Most of these drills can be done with any body of text (e.g. a card, a book, a news article, etc).

Clarity

- Pen in mouth - Take a pen and place it in the back of your mouth between your teeth. Then, try to read something out loud and work around the pen, which should serve as an obstacle for your tongue. This drill forces you to articulate more clearly.
- Insert a word - Insert a word between every word you read out loud. This can be an easy word like “and” or a more difficult word like “watermelon”. For example, instead of saying “He ran down the hill”, you would say “He and ran and down and the and hill”. This drill teaches you to make each word more independent from others and avoid slurring words together.
- Backwards - Read any body of text out loud backward. For example, instead of saying “He ran down the hill”, you would say “Hill the down ran he”. This drill teaches you to focus on the delivery and clarity of your speech rather than the words themselves.
- Over-enunciation - While you read out loud, pronounce every syllable in an exaggerated fashion. Work your mouth so that you feel like each syllable is “stretching” your face. This drill helps you with clarity by training your mouth to pronounce everything rather than slur or skip over some syllables.
- Tongue twisters - Search up tongue twisters online and read through as many of them as you can. Say each one until you can say it correctly at a normal speaking pace. This drill focuses on pronunciation and provides practice for enunciating difficult sentences.

Breath Control

- One breath - Find some text and inhale, then read as much as you can in one breath before exhaling. Repeat and try to increase the duration that you are able to speak before running out of breath each time. Make sure that you are still speaking at a reasonable pace and with good clarity. This drill helps you regulate your breathing while speaking.
- Fifty states - Pull up a list of the fifty U.S. states and read through as many of them as you can in one breath. This drill helps you develop a speaking rhythm and forces you to control your breathing.