



Debate

During their committee sessions at the conference, delegates have the opportunity to make speeches and comments in front of their peers. In addition, they will also converse informally with other delegates. Public speaking is often one of the more difficult skills for students to feel comfortable with. Students who do not feel comfortable speaking in front of a group will often not participate as much at WASMUN, and they usually do not have very much fun. However, public speaking can be practiced in innumerable ways to overcome delegate's anxieties. All of the activities and strategies outlined below are designed to be fast paced and interesting while also preparing delegates for WASMUN.

General Speaking Tips

Public speaking at WASMUN takes a more specific form than students might be used to, but the standard rules for public speaking still apply. Delegates need to be able to convey their point clearly and persuasively to an audience of their peers. Speaking confidently and projecting voices is also essential, particularly in the larger committees. Nonverbal behavior is also worth a bit of practice. The use of gestures can either serve to distract an audience or captivate them. Nervous and unnecessary movements can distract the audience, but proper gestures can serve to engage and captivate an audience, and make points more emphatic. All of these speaking skills apply in many situations, but delegates can practice them as they are learning and practicing for the conference in any activity that requires public speaking.

Timed Speeches

One of the difficult characteristics of speaking at WASMUN is that delegates have time limits on their speeches and comments. The best way to feel comfortable about these limits is to practice. A focused and concise speech that ends the correct time will certainly come across as more persuasive than half of a rambling speech that has lost the committee's attention. One easy way to practice speaking under time limits is to have students prepare a short speech about any topic without notes or preparation. This will give the students a taste of the nature of WASMUN speeches, and also build their confidence and convince them that they can indeed get up and give a speech without major preparation. In later stages this activity can be used to refine speaking techniques and to give students a chance to hear others and work on their own cadence and flow.

Prepared Speeches: One way to start delegates on the path towards good time management is to have them prepare and write speeches on topics that are important to them. By writing out a speech the delegate will be able to pay more careful attention to ensuring it is the proper length. As delegates progress their notes can take the form of talking points, and eventually they will feel comfortable with giving an impromptu speech that will fit into a time limit.

Practice Techniques: Delegates should practice giving both long and short speeches, as these are the two formats they will encounter at WASMUN. Speech lengths are at the committee chair's discretion, but are typically two minutes long, with short comments lasting thirty seconds.



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Delegates should practice with a stopwatch in order to feel comfortable giving a coherent and meaningful statement. For short comments, it is essential that delegates express their thoughts clearly and concisely because of the short time span.

Debates

Another activity that will help delegates prepare for WASMUN is debates. Most students have participated in some form of prepared debate, but a fast-paced and less rigid debate is often useful to prepare a delegate for the free-flowing WASMUN debate. Students can be given a topic, and then told to research both sides of the issue on a short timescale, perhaps a day or even part of a class period. It is helpful for students to consider both sides of the issue because a clear understanding of the opposing arguments enables better prepared refutations of those arguments. Using timed speeches also prepares the students for WASMUN's time restrictions. For students who are familiar with policy debate, this format will seem familiar, but policy debate is one of the best forms of preparation for WASMUN, and it is often the delegates who are also debaters who become the policymakers in their committees. These debates are also a great way to get delegates to begin thinking on their feet and responding to arguments using facts that they have researched. Other students can evaluate the arguments made in each debate and also the speaking style of each debater, feedback that can then be used to improve each delegate's performance both in future debates and while a delegate at WASMUN.

Simulations (Mini-MUN)

After delegates feel comfortable with public speaking and argumentation, it is a highly beneficial to run a simulation based on WASMUN. Speaking and debating skills are important, but knowing and understanding the rules of debate is equally vital. The delegate manual features a comprehensive overview of the rules which can be used for simulations. For beginning simulations it is often helpful to have students work with partners to represent a single nation to help them feel more comfortable speaking. Timely topics from the news are excellent for these simulations because students will probably know more about the subject and how different countries will feel about the issue. Often, the more contentious topics are the most effective at stimulating meaningful debate because there are clearly defined sides to those issues and delegates can get excited and "into" the simulation. Allow a couple of days for research, and then begin the simulation using the rules for WASMUN. There is a lot of flexibility in terms of how the simulation is run. It can be used as purely a speaking exercise, or resolutions can also be added to the equation to further prepare the students for WASMUN. Once delegates are comfortable with speaking, a simulation is usually a very fun activity that will prepare delegates for WASMUN and allow them to know the rules, and also have an operational knowledge of the rules that will prove invaluable at WASMUN.

MUN-Specific Tips

There are several components of an effective MUN speech. Delegates need to convey their nation's position and history regarding the agenda topic and any other factors that will help other delegates understand what position is being taken and the rationale behind that decision. Delegates may also mention their position relative to that of other nations. Regardless of the



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nature of the speech, all speeches should be constructive and diplomatic. The purpose of the committee is to discuss remedies to problems and frequently compromising, rather than simply arguing, leads to the best results. A well-written speech will persuasively convey the nation's position, but for nearly every nation, the most realistic position allows for some compromises to be made. Another key area is the rules of debate. These rules can be confusing at first, but if used in the context of practice simulations, students will quickly become familiar with them. Quizzes or other activities can also be used to encourage delegates to learn the rules well.

Additional Notes

Public speaking is a difficult skill to master, but in their roles as delegates, students should first strive to become comfortable with speaking in front of other people. Students should be encouraged to make speeches as quickly as possible at the beginning of the conference, as the delegates who deliver convincing speeches early in the committee session will be more able to form coalitions and take leadership roles. However, speaking simply for the sake of speaking is generally discouraged because it takes time from the entire committee without accomplishing significant committee business. Good research skills are critical to making compelling speeches.