



Extemp Delivery: Voice, Gestures, and Going Without Notes.

Great content falls flat if the delivery is rushed or stiff. Use these drills and checklists to sound natural, move with purpose, and avoid the three most common beginner mistakes.

Voice

SKILL	WHAT TO DO	QUICK DRILL
Pace	Aim for conversational speed; slow down on key facts	Read a paragraph at 3 speeds
Volume	Project to the back of the room without shouting	Practice across a large room
Pauses	Pause after each point and before the answer	Count one beat at every transition
Variety	Change pitch and energy for emphasis	Say one sentence 3 ways
Clarity	Finish word endings, open the mouth	Tongue twisters daily

Nervous speakers rush. If a speech feels like it is going too fast, it probably sounds fast to the judge too.

Body and gestures

- ♦ **Stance.** Feet about shoulder width, weight balanced, hands relaxed at your sides between gestures.
- ♦ **Purposeful movement.** Take a small step to a new spot at each transition, then stand still while making a point.
- ♦ **Gestures.** Use them to count points ("first, second, third"), show size, or emphasize. Keep them above the waist and within a natural range.
- ♦ **Eye contact.** Look at different people for a full thought each, not a quick scan.
- ♦ **Face.** Match your expression to the content: serious for serious topics, open and warm otherwise.

Speaking without a script

NSDA describes extemp as delivered from memory, and notes that many tournaments prohibit consulting notes during the speech. Some leagues allow one index card (UIL and Stoa allow a 3 by 5 inch card), so check your rules and train as if you will have none.

- 1 **Memorize the skeleton.** Thesis, three point labels, and the conclusion line.
- 2 **Keep evidence in short phrases.** Remember source + one key number per point.
- 3 **Practice with a blank page.** Write your outline, study it, hide it, and speak.
- 4 **Plan a recovery line.** If you blank, say "Let me return to the question" and restate your thesis. Judges notice recovery more than mistakes.

Filler words
Everyone says "um" at first. Replace it with a silent pause. Record yourself and count fillers per minute to track progress.

- Coaching note**
Want a plan built around your speaker? Book a free consultation with Scholar Coach at the link below.

Book a free consultation. The short intake takes about a minute and opens right away.

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