



# Harvard Model Congress

## Europe 2024

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# Guide to Public Speaking

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Public speaking is intimidating for students, professionals, and leaders all throughout the world. Like many skills, the best way to improve your public speaking skills is to practice. However, we have compiled a few of our favorite tips and tricks to help boost your public speaking skills to the next level:

### **1. Project Confidence, Even if You're Nervous**

You'd be surprised to learn how many of the world's "best" public speakers absolutely hate public speaking. The key to their success is projecting a calm, confident demeanor. In addition to making your speaking more even and compelling, projecting confidence can actually trick your mind into making you genuinely feel more confident. Even if you still get tingly or your stomach is turning before giving a speech, your audience will never know.

### **2. Speak Slower Than You Think You Need To**

Many people talk much faster than they even realize when speaking in public because they are nervous. Even when you have a lot to say in a short amount of time, your audience will appreciate and remember more of what you say if you slow your speaking way down and really take time to emphasize your key points. You may feel like you're talking "too slow," but chances are it sounds JUST RIGHT to your audience.

### **3. Vary Your Tone and Volume**

We've all been in class with a teacher who drones on and on at the same tone and volume for an entire hour. It's not very fun to listen to! Instead, when public speaking, you'll want to vary your tone, pace and volume to help emphasize key parts of your speech and keep the audience's attention.

*Fun Fact: Getting quiet and lowering the volume of your voice during especially important parts of a speech can be even more captivating to your audience than shouting because they will literally start to “lean in” to hang onto your words. Try this out in one of your HMC speeches when making an extra important or serious point!*

## 4. Focus on Pronunciation and Articulation

It's easy to forget, but try to pronounce each word with clear articulation. Try to avoid using filler words such as “you know” or “I mean” (remember that pauses can add to a speech!) You must act committed to the ideals and goals of your speech and what you are saying, so don't use words such as “maybe” or “might”- use positive words such as “will” and “must.”

## 5. Do Your Research, Come Prepared

Speaking “extemporaneously” means speaking without writing down what you're going to say ahead of time. This is one of the most challenging kinds of public speaking, but at HMC, you may find that you need to make a speech in favor of a bill or against a particular policy without having a chance to write out your speech word for word. That's ok – in fact, it's great practice! Leaders in business or politics have to speak extemporaneously all the time. The key is to do your research ahead of time and really listen to what others are saying when they speak.

Just think about if someone asked you to talk about your favorite book or activity. You'd probably find it much easier to speak without a script than if you were talking about astrophysics or Canadian trade policy. That's because the more you know about the topic about which you are speaking, the easier you will find it to organize your thoughts.

*Tip: Writing down a few quick bullet points or slowing down to think about how you want to structure your thoughts are other great ways to make extemporaneous speaking a little easier!*

*Note: Being prepared also makes public speaking easier even if you're writing down a speech because you will feel more confident and be able to organize your thoughts much quicker.*

## Conclusion

There are many additional tips you can use to hone your public speaking, such as watching videos of speakers you admire and trying to replicate some of the techniques they use. However, like we said, the best possible way to get better is to **practice**.

HMC Europe will give you some great opportunities to practice, but don't wait until the conference to give it a try! Whether it's by speaking up in class or practicing in the mirror—the more you speak, the easier it will get!