

MODULE

# 11

---

## The Anticipatory Pause

The grab — and how to kill "um" and  
"like" for good

---

## WHAT THIS MODULE COVERS

The second power pause does the opposite of the first. Instead of letting something land, it makes the audience desperate for what comes next.

An **anticipatory pause** follows words that are powerful but incomplete — words that leave the audience wanting more. You say them, then stop, and let the room ask itself: what is it? What is coming?

Steve's own speech given around the world opens with a sequence of them. "I'm going to tell you something tonight that ought to scare the hell out of you." Pause. "I bet the odds — and believe this — the odds are better than 50-50." Pause. "Better than 50-50." Pause. "That the world will be dead in 30 years." Pause. Then: "And when I'm done with this speech tonight, tell me I'm wrong." Pause. "No, please. Tell me I'm wrong."

That is the **grab**. Do not open a speech by announcing your name and topic — they usually know who you are. Open with something that pulls the whole room in and does not let go.

Pauses have a second, more practical use: they eliminate filler. Instead of saying "um," let the segment of words work and then take the break. The same applies to "like," which has become part of the lexicon of youth and tests badly. Let the pause do that work for you.

One more benefit. Because you are not speaking, the audience has to look at your face — so the pause is also where your facial expressions do their work.

---

**2**

power pauses in the method

**4-5**

words per segment, then a natural break

**0**

ums required, ever

---

## KEY CONCEPTS

### The anticipatory pause

Powerful words that want completion, followed by silence. The audience leans in to fill the gap themselves.

### **The grab**

Your opening. Its job is to take one hundred percent of the room off their phones and out of side conversations before you say anything else.

### **Pause instead of "um"**

Filler words come from discomfort with silence. Replace the filler with the silence and you sound more considered, not less.

### **Natural break points**

As you write, look for the place after every four or five words where a pause would fall naturally — because your voice rose, or fell, or because a word deserves to hang.



### **REMEMBER**

- Never open with your name and your topic. Open with a grab.
- Powerful but incomplete, then silence. That is the whole mechanism.
- Every "um" is a pause you were afraid to take.
- While you are silent, your face is doing the talking. Give it something to say.

---

**PRACTICE**

# Exercises

Type directly into the shaded boxes below and save the file. Come back to your answers after you have practised — this is your record of what changed.

---

**EXERCISE 1**

## Write your grab

Take a presentation you actually have to give and build the first thirty seconds properly.

**Write your opening line — something powerful and incomplete that makes people need the next sentence.**

**Write the next three lines, marking exactly where you will pause.**

**Record it. Did the pauses feel too long? Did they look too long?**

**EXERCISE 2****Kill your filler**

You cannot fix a habit you have not measured.

**Record two minutes of yourself speaking unscripted. Count every "um," "uh," "like" and "you know." What is the total?**

**Record the same two minutes again, replacing every filler with a deliberate pause. What was hard about it?**

**Do it a third time. What is the count now?**

Tick each one once you have done it:

- ☐ Counted my filler words
- ☐ Recorded a second take using pauses
- ☐ Recorded a third take
- ☐ Counted again and compared

**EXERCISE 3****Mark your break points**

**Take one page of something you have written. Rewrite it here in four-to-five word segments, marking where the natural pause falls after each.**

---

**BEFORE YOU MOVE ON**

**One thing from this module I will use the next time I speak:**

**When and where I will use it:**