

Public Speaking Skills

- Body Language** Make sure that you have good posture. If your shoulders are sagging or your legs are crossed, you will not appear sincere, and people will not listen your message.
- Articulation** Articulation is how your total vocal process works. It is important to use good diction and articulation so that others can easily understand what you are saying.
- Pronunciation** Students need to pronounce each word clearly. Avoid slang, except to make a point, and do not slur words. Avoid saying “like,” “um,” “you know,” or other filler phrases. It’s okay to pause to collect your thoughts. It may seem like you are silent for an eternity, but those listening to you probably won’t notice, and you will seem much more professional if you can avoid using fillers.
- Pitch** Pitch refers how high or low a voice is. What is most important is to avoid a monotone, and vary pitch as you speak to convey meaning.
- Speed** The speed, or pace, is an important variable to control. Between 140-160 words per minute is the normal pace for a persuasive speech. If you speak too fast you will be difficult to understand, but if you speak too slowly you may sound like you are lecturing or talking down to your audience. If you are not sure about your speed, tape yourself for one minute and then replay it. How do you sound?
- Pauses** The pause is a critical persuasive tool. When you want to emphasize a certain word, pausing just before it will highlight the word. If you really want to make your point stand out, pause before and after the word.
- Volume** Volume is another good tool for a persuasive speech, but you should use it with caution. If you yell all the way through your speech, people will become accustomed to it and it will lose its effectiveness. On the other hand, a few well-timed increases in volume can liven up a speech. Try to “project,” or throw your voice out over the entire room. Everything you say should be audible in the very last row.
- Quality** Quality of voice is gauged by the overall impact that your voice has on your listeners. Quality of voice is the net caliber of your voice, its character and attributes. You should try to keep the vocal quality high; it is what separates your voice from everyone else’s.
- Variance** Variance of vocal elements is the most important consideration of all. Try to change your pitch, volume, and speed at least once every 30 seconds, if only for just one word. Never go more than one paragraph without a vocal variance. This keeps the audience listening, if for no other reason than it sounds interesting! Let your words speak for themselves; reflect what you are saying with your voice. If you use the word “strangle,” say it with a hint of menace in your voice. If you say the word “heave,” let the audience feel the force behind it.

STUDENT NOTES: PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS

Eye Contact: you should be looking at the audience the entire time. You also want to look at different people. The more eye contact you make with every single person, makes you more personal. But you also don't want to stare and make people feel uncomfortable!

Hand Gestures: your hands should not be in your pockets, or touching any clothes, or be behind you. Use your hands! You can emphasize points with your hands.

Body Movement: you want to control your body, but that doesn't mean not moving at all. You can take a couple paces during your speech between your main points. Use your body to put feeling, passion and emotion into your speech.

Posture: you need to stand straight with feet shoulder length apart.

Confidence: no matter how nervous, shy, or scared you are – you need to appear as confident, strong as possible.

Volume: nice loud voice, but also change your volume. You don't want to have a monotone (flat) voice.

Emotion: you need to believe in what you say. Have feeling and passion behind your words.

Speed: Don't talk too fast. Don't talk too slow. Speak in a normal, conversational voice. But you also want to vary your speed at times. You do not want to talk at the same speed the entire speech or it will be boring.

Dramatic Pauses: when you want to emphasize something very important.... pause! Don't say anything for a couple seconds so the audience is paying more attention to see what you will say.

Clear Voice: Clearly articulate your voice. A good practice technique is putting a pen or pencil in your mouth while you speak and try to speak as clearly as possible.

The Introduction: The Introduction is where you want to get the attention of the audience. First, you should have a hook (story, quotation, statistic, joke, or other attention grabber). Second, you need to state your topic. Third, you need to give a preview of your three main points.

The Body: This is where you talk in depth about your three main points. You need to provide evidence, details, and examples for each of your main points.

Conclusion: This is where you summarize and emphasize your points. Try to draw all your information together and leave the audience with an attention grabber, question, quotation, or fact to think about after you are done speaking.