Delivering a Vocal Presentation

In any speech, demonstration, play or choral reading you must be aware of how you’re delivering your message as well as the content of the message. This skill sheet describes the basics to remember for delivering vocal presentations. For information on writing a piece to be delivered before an audience, refer to the “Writing for Public Speaking” skill sheet on page 35.

Delivering a Speech

Voice
As many famous people have discovered, your voice can be a powerful tool. But like any tool you must practice with it to use it well. When giving a speech, you want the entire audience to hear you. The following points may help:

- Project your voice and speak up. Voice projection is not shouting, and you can do it without straining. Speaking from the back of the throat makes your voice sound weak and tires it faster; use your diaphragm muscles to make your voice carry. The diaphragm muscles are between your chest and stomach. Using them will help you relax and make your voice sound stronger.

- Try to sound like yourself. Use a conversational tone with familiar words.

- Speak at a comfortable pace so everyone can hear and understand your entire speech.

- Enunciate (pronounce clearly) all vowels and consonants.

- Don’t slur your words – practice pronouncing the d’s, t’s and ing’s on the end of words.

- When you’re rehearsing a speech, have someone stand near the back of the room to give you feedback on your projection and delivery, as well as content.

Remember: A strong confident voice will make your message more believable.

Eye Contact
Eye contact, or lack of it, can make a difference in how receptive the audience is to your message. These points may help:

- Maintain eye contact with your audience. Try to memorize your opening and closing statements so that you can maintain steady eye contact when you need to hold the audience’s attention.
Your audience will be more receptive and attentive if you look at them.

- Try not to stare at a fixed object. Let your eyes travel casually and naturally from person to person throughout your speech.

- Look for friendly faces with whom to make eye contact, but don’t neglect the rest of the audience. Once you get into the body of your presentation, watch the faces of the audience members to see whether they understand and follow you.

**Gestures and Expressions**

Gestures can be a powerful addition to any speech. They can also be a terrible distraction. The following points may help you turn gestures into a public speaking asset:

- Use gestures only if they are natural to you. Effective hand gestures come from being relaxed and spontaneous, not from fidgeting.

- Smile! If you look like you enjoy what you’re doing, so will your audience. Be dramatic, but match your facial expressions to your words. Look serious and sincere if your message is serious, smile if your message is positive.

**Posture**

Posture is very important to maintaining an interested and confident appearance. The following points may help.

- If a podium is available, place your notes on it, but don’t lean on it. Leaning gives the impression that you’re tired, sick or bored.

- If you choose to walk while you talk, maintain your upright posture and hold your notes above your waist. Avoid pacing because it is distracting and may make you look nervous.

**Other Tips**

- Warm up your vocal chords and facial muscles before beginning your presentation.

- Be yourself, don’t try to imitate others.

- Practice speaking techniques, not just individual speeches.