

Delivering a Persuasive Speech

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- **Level:**
 - Upper-intermediate to advanced
- **Overview:**
 - Students need to understand that how they say something and how they physically present themselves are just as important as what they say. By understanding the dynamics involved in effective persuasive speaking, students will improve their overall confidence in communicating.
- **Purpose:**
 - The purpose of this lesson is to improve students' speaking skills by understanding persuasion proficiencies. The lesson is presented in second person, making it more meaningful as a resource for the students.
- **Objectives:** Students will be able to:
 - Demonstrate the appropriate classroom public speaking and listening skills (e.g., body language, articulation, listening to be able to identify specific examples of the speaker's coordination of talking and action) that would be necessary to influence or change someone's mind or way of thinking about a topic.
 - Define the elements of persuasion.
 - Recognize the elements of personal credibility.
 - Develop methods to analyze other students' speeches.
 - Understand outlining main ideas.
 - Create a persuasive speech.
- **Resources/Materials:**
 - Teacher-prepared topics for persuasive speeches.
- **Assessments:**
 - The class will assess each speaker's performance in terms of voice and body coordination, and in terms of persuasiveness. Each class can develop performance assessments such as rubrics to facilitate this process.
- **Activities and Procedures:** Delivering a Persuasive Speech
 - Teacher's Anticipatory Set
 - During class discussion, define and explain how people make decisions based on what they see and hear. Explain that sometimes we have to use skills to convince others about our positions. Have the students recall and list their own experiences trying to convince their friends about something, and then ask them to share these with the class.
 - The Procedure
 - Pick a proposition that not everyone would agree with such as: "nuclear power plants are superior energy sources." Ask the students to write a 6 to 8 - minute speech in outline form to persuade the group.

The Handout for the Students

The Lesson - Your Voice and Body are Your Best Tools

You are a natural talker. You have done it all your life. Every time you talk to someone, you are trying to make him or her see things your way. It is true, that any time you say a fact you are saying it is true.

For this speech, you have to guess that not everyone will agree with you from the start. It is your job to make them see things your way. The goal of this speech is to change someone's mind or way of thinking about a topic. Your voice and body language are very important. Here you will see how your delivery can help.

There are several important aspects of presentation to keep in mind:

- **Body language** - make sure that you have a proper posture. If your shoulders are sagging and your legs are crossed, you will not appear as being honest.
- **Articulation** - articulation means how your talking process works. There are several steps to this. First, you need air from the lungs. Your vocal cords must be working. Your mouth and tongue must work together. And you have to make sure that you have some saliva in your mouth to keep things oiled. You should be aware of your physical makeup to be able to understand how you speak.
- **Pronunciation** - pronounce each word. Avoid slang, except to make a point. And do not slur your words. Avoid saying, "you know."
- **Pitch** - pitch refers to the highs and lows of your voice. Whatever you do, avoid a monotone.
- **Speed** - your speed, or pace, is important to control. Between 140-160 words per minute is the normal pace. Any faster and you may appear to be insincere. Any slower and you sound like you are lecturing. If you are not sure about your speed, tape yourself for one minute and then replay it and count the number of words you used in the minute! The human ear and brain can hear over 400 spoken words per minute. So, if you are going too slow your listeners' minds are going to start to wander.
- **Pauses** - the pause is a critical tool. When you want to highlight a certain word, just pause for one second before. If you really want to punch it, pause before and after the word.
- **Volume** - volume is another good tool for persuasive speech, but you should use it with caution. If you scream all the way through your speech, people will become used to it. On the other hand, a few well-timed shouts can liven up the old speech! Try to "project" or throw your voice out over the entire group - speak to the last row.
- **Quality** - quality of voice is tested by the effect that your voice has on your listeners. Quality of voice is its nature and traits. Try to keep your vocal quality high; it is what separates your voice from everyone else's.
- **Variance** - variance of voice is your most important consideration of all! 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 change. This keeps your group locked into your speech, if for no other reason than it sounds interesting! Let the words speak for themselves. Reflect their nature through your voice. If you use the word "strangle," say it with a hint of danger in your voice. If you say the word "heave," let the group feel the force behind it. If you say the word "bulldozer," make it sound like a big earthmover, not like a baby with a shovel.

The Strategy: Appear Wise

When you are trying to convince someone of something, you must sell yourself before you sell your message. If people feel that you are not being reasonable, you do not stand a chance. You must be committed to the goals of your speech and what you are saying. Do not use words such as "maybe" or "might"- use positive words such as "will" and "must."

You are the power figure in this speech, so you had better supply enough information to prove your points. People can usually spot someone who is trying to "wing" a speech. You should also appear to be truthful --even when you are really stretching a point. If you do not appear to be honest, people will doubt your word and tune out your speech.

Lastly, do not be afraid to show a little emotion. Your body and voice must match the tone of your words. If your language is strong, you must present a physical force to go along with your delivery.

The Comments and Goals

Self-control

You cannot sit back and let your words do all of the talking. You must use your total self to deliver your message. This means that you will have to show a little of your personality to the group. Your group will be supportive.

The Group Reaction

The group has two major issues to consider after each speech. First, the delivery. Were the speaker's body, words, and actions in agreement? Did one support the other or was there tension between the body and the voice? Secondly, were you persuaded? Why or why not? Discuss what makes a persuasive speech work and how the little changes can make it work better.

<http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Parker-Speech.html>