

## Speech Delivery Skills: From Extreme to the Ideal

### Goal:

The goal of this exercise is to teach students the ideal skills involved in delivering a speech. Specifically, students will work on the areas of delivery that are weak and hone those skills to perfection. Additionally, students will be able to recognize the effective delivery skills in others' presentations.

### Rationale:

Lucas (2004) states that a good speech delivery “does not call attention to itself. It conveys the speaker’s ideas clearly, interestingly, and without distracting the audience.” Andrews, Andrews and Williams (2004) go on to state that effective delivery is “associated with good eye contact, effective gestures, movement, and facial expressions; and an effective speaking voice.”

Few public speaking instructors would argue that effective speaking is significantly related to delivery skills, and that competence at delivery can often compensate for deficiencies in the written speech. However, few instructors would probably state that their beginning public speaking students possess those delivery skills necessary to be considered an effective speaker.

Because of its undeniable importance, then, this exercise is specifically aimed at teaching those skills that are necessary for students to master the public speaking arena.

### Description:

This exercise is fairly simple to do and serves as a fun ice-breaker to the discussion surrounding public speaking delivery skills. It does not need to be completed at the start of the semester, but is better incorporated during the delivery lesson of the course. This may also provide the instructor with some knowledge about areas of delivery where each student could use improvement, allowing the instructor to tailor the exact behavior of each student to best address their needs.

Students are given a brief reading to be delivered to the class. The material selected should be familiar to the students so that they are able to deliver it with minimal need to “read” from the page. It could be: well-known song lyrics, the Pledge of Allegiance, a portion of a speech the class has been working with, etc. The length of the reading should be such that all students can participate in the activity in one class period.

Each student is also given a “mode of delivery” card. These delivery cues range from one extreme to the other with regard to specific delivery components. For instance, cards

may read: very low volume (whisper), very high volume (shouting), no use of hands (in the pockets), over-dramatization with the hands, very slow pace, very fast pace, don't look at anyone, look only at one person, etc. By taking each delivery skill and varying it in its extreme forms, students will see that a continuum exists for each skill.

In addition, audiences can be changed as well, illustrating the idea that delivery skills may vary by the audience; for instance, some audiences may need a slower pace or louder volume, etc.

#### Typical Results:

Students tend to love this activity! It provides a fun way to actually experience the various modes of delivery that people engage in when giving a speech. Students are quick to recognize that the extremes are not ideal, and this exercise leads quite naturally into a discussion of each of the delivery skills, the role each plays in the overall delivery, and the ideal strategy to use when speaking. In addition, the exercise is quite humorous, and this humor also helps students to understand that they are not the only ones having a particular delivery problem, that it is a concern for everyone in the class.

#### Bibliography:

Andrews, P.H., Andrews, J.R. & Williams, G. (2004). *Public Speaking: Connecting You and Your Audience*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Lucas, S.E. (2004). *The Art of Public Speaking*. New York: McGraw-Hill.