

Wolverhampton Speakers Club

‘All The World’s A Stage’ - Speaking as Acting



To act, or not to act - that is the question ...

This is the fifth ‘P’ - **Performance** - to go with our other four ‘Ps’. Let’s have a look at what it means for you as a speaker ...



The fact that when you speak in public you are (we hope!) using some of the speaking techniques we teach you means that you are not using your normal conversational voice - you are, in fact, playing a part

This doesn’t mean that you are being insincere, just that you slightly change your persona.

But is it acting?

You adopt your public speaking identity, but it’s not really acting - it is, though, a performance.

What is a public speaking performance?

You might not realise it but your speech is actually a performance that you do from your own feelings and convictions to inspire and win over your audience.



The challenge is in communicating those feelings and convictions, because audiences aren’t mind readers!

Just knowing your material is not really sufficient. It is the combination of your knowledge, your enthusiasm and your inspiring delivery of a well-structured speech that makes the whole greater than the sum of its parts. You are letting your audience see and feel what you have to say.

A public speaking performance, then, is where we use heightened vocabulary and delivery to get our point across and make it interesting or persuasive for the audience. Most of the documents in this series introduce why and how we do this.

How Do We Do It?

It's not just one thing that we do, but a range of techniques that we combine together - when we're practised with them they come naturally, but when we start out we need to think about them.

In speaking we need to draw upon all of our means of expression: physical presence, voice, gestures, storytelling, and interesting and relevant content. A speaker's job is never merely to deliver information but to create influence, motivation or entertainment based on a compelling message.



It's partly about the way we speak, of course, but it's also about the way we communicate non-verbally with our body and the way we use our space.

The way we speak

Speaking technique the main thing we learn about at WSC so you shouldn't have too much difficulty with it as you progress through our exercises.

So let's remind ourselves of some of the ways in which our speaking can help our performance. Look out for places in your speech where you can use them.

- Most important to enhance any kind of performance - correct use of our **4 P's**:
 - Pitch
 - Pace
 - Pause
 - Pronunciation
- Remember about **voice production**
- Try to develop '**voice music**' whenever you speak
- Try not to be over-reliant on your **notes** - that will get in the way of your performance
- Consider using some of the **figures of speech** we call 'Rhetoric'
- **Memorise** at least the first and last lines of your speech and deliver them with conviction so as to make an impact
- **Practise! Practise! Practise!**



Remember that all of these are covered in this series of documents

The non-verbal performance

The way you stand and move can add so much to your performance, and at least **the appearance** of confidence is a good way to present yourself to the audience.

Because you are performing, your gestures and the way you use your body are important to complement your speaking, so don't ignore them.

Gestures include not only using arms and hands but eye contact and facial expressions - and they must be appropriate to what you are saying and be practised well. A little exaggeration is allowed but don't go over the top (unless it's there to make a point - if so, use it sparingly).

Your performance space

You can think of the space around the lectern (if you're using one) as your 'performance space' - the arena from which you communicate with your audience.

You can move from side-to-side, but you must take care - if you use too much movement you can distract your audience.

If you do move around don't move in regular patterns or your audience will be watching you and counting your paces, anticipating when you are going to turn. The result? ... you lose their attention on what you are saying.

Some slight movement towards the audience can emphasise a point, but remember 'your space' and 'their space': moving too far towards the audience can feel threatening. Some slight movement backwards can encourage your audience to think about a point with you.

On the whole, movement to the side is better than movement backwards and forwards.

A trick that is sometimes used is to use different sides of the central position to emphasise contrasting points.

You will need to become slightly larger than life and maybe use two more P's - '**Passion**' and '**Presence**'.

Fluency

As you get more experienced you will gain fluency in combining speaking and non-verbal communication and you will become comfortable in the art of presenting yourself and your message - the art of performance.

You will become an expert practitioner of **oral stagecraft** (a lovely phrase used by the linguist David Crystal).



A performance is 'YOU PLUS'