



# How to Coach Public Speaking / Oratory

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## Introduction

A guide that instructs on how to use oratory Podium Points to improve students' public speaking and performance skills.

## Learning Objectives

Students will refine their oratory performance through arts-integrated techniques.

## Common Core standard:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.4](#)

Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.4](#)

Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

## Procedures:

1. Read through the general tips section before you begin to coach your student on his/her oratorical performance.
2. As your students grow as public speakers, use the Coaching Guide to fix isolated and prolonged speaking issues.

## **General Helpful Tips**

### **Easier Fixes**

Go for the easy fixes first. Volume, pace, posture, eye contact, and diction are usually the low-hanging fruit. Tone, natural gestures, and emphasis can be much more challenging.

### **Offering Feedback**

Start out your constructive criticism with a compliment (warm feedback) before offering something for them to address (cool feedback). If time permits, let them try out whatever you've asked them to address and give them immediate feedback. It's OK to ask them to intensify the direction if it's not enough.

### **Rephrasing for positivity**

Avoid using the word "don't" (e.g. "Don't slump your shoulders") when coaching. Rather, see if you can frame things in a positive way (e.g. "I'd love to see what happens if you really lift those two words"...or "I'm going to challenge you to make eye contact with 5 different people").



## COACHING ORATORY

Coaching Guide to Improve Students' Performances and Public Speaking Skills

### Oratory Issue

### Possible Solutions

<p><i>Your student is too quiet...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Refer to volume as a 1-to-10 scale. If they're currently a 3, ask them to see what happens if they go for a 6, for instance. You can also get all students to practice volume on a 1-to-10 scale, using a one-syllable word, said just once to keep the sound contained. (Be prepared for 10-- it will get loud!)</li><li>• Put students in pairs and, as they face each other, have them practice exchanging a line from their speech at varying distances. How loud do they need to be when only a couple of inches away? What about halfway across the room? All the way across?</li><li>• Get all students engaged by having them line up on one end of the room and have them say "Hey" while imagining their voice traveling towards the opposite wall. Have them silently choose their favorite color and have them imagine their voice is painting the opposite wall that color when it reaches the wall.</li><li>• Have another student sit at the back of the room and raise his/her hand whenever s/he has trouble hearing the speaker. The speaker uses that visual cue to adjust volume.</li></ul>
<p><i>If your student speaks too quickly and/or has poor diction...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask them to over-exaggerate the consonants, making sure to pay particular attention to those at the ends of words. (You can model this with "Good friends, we must attend to the ends of words." You can</li></ul>

	<p>engage the whole class by having them do this with you.) Often what a student perceives as over-exaggeration is really the level we're hoping to achieve. If it really is over-exaggeration, then you can ask them to find a middle ground.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As an exercise, have students take a walk around the room while speaking their text. They may take only one step per word, and they have to inhale and then exhale a full breath in between sentences. Ask them if they noticed a difference. This is probably slower than they would actually need to speak, but the exercise can be helpful in raising awareness of how quickly they were speaking before.</li> <li>• Do some tongue-twisters with the class. Have them say each tongue-twister three times as fast as they can while challenging themselves to really articulate each sound. Here are some good ones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Girl gargoyle, guy gargoyle</li> <li>○ Red leather, yellow leather</li> <li>○ Unique New York, New York's unique, you know you need unique New York</li> <li>○ Rubber baby buggy bumper</li> <li>○ She sells seashells by the seashore</li> <li>○ Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers</li> <li>○ Aluminum, linoleum, petroleum</li> <li>○ At a minute or two to two today</li> <li>○ A thing distinctly hard to say</li> <li>○ And harder still to do</li> <li>○ For we'll meet a tattoo at twenty to two</li> <li>○ With a rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat-oo</li> <li>○ And the dragon will come at the sound of the drum</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>If your student is rocking, swaying or has "happy feet"...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask for a student volunteer and have the volunteer gently but firmly hold the students' feet or shoulders in place while they speak. Often, the awareness is enough to help the speaker adjust his/ her body. (Always ask the speaker "Is it OK if so-and-so touches your shoulders?" first. If it's not, ask the speaker to choose someone that works for them.)</li> <li>• If the student can't feel that it's happening, use your cell phone to record them speaking for a few lines of their speech and then show the student what their body is doing so they can adjust.</li> </ul>

<p><i>If your student is rocking, swaying or has "happy feet"...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage the whole class, by having them stand up and place their feet under their shoulders (no wider and no narrower). Ask them to imagine that there are roots growing from the bottoms of their feet that are gently anchoring them to the spot on the floor. Meanwhile, have them imagine that a string is coming from the center of the top of their head and the string is gently pulling them towards the ceiling while their feet remain planted on the ground. Hands should be down by their sides. Have them bring their shoulders up to their ears and hold them there for a few seconds, then release them, allowing the shoulders to relax and roll gently back. This exercise is great for both improving posture and releasing physical and emotional tension.</li> </ul>
<p><i>If your student is having trouble projecting the emotional tone of the speech...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask them why they chose the piece. If the student isn't making a personal connection, ask them if they've ever felt like the person who originally gave the speech has (e.g. has it ever made you angry to be told you can't do something just because you're a girl?). Help them to find they way in--you might need to give them a modern analogy of the situation that they can relate to or remind them what it was like to play make-believe when they were younger. They can apply those make-believe skills to oratory!</li> </ul>
<p><i>If your student's speech sounds robotic or has incorrect emphasis...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask the student what the most important word is in a particular phrase or sentence. Once the student identifies it, ask them if it is a good thing or bad thing. Have them convey that meaning with their voice. (You can model this with the phrase "that sweater." The first time you say it, make it sound like the ugliest sweater you've ever seen. The second time, make it sound like that most fabulous. You can even engage the class by having them say the phrase in those ways with you after you've first modeled it.)</li> <li>Have students identify and underline operative words on their scripts. Have them practice performing by giving special emphasis to those words.</li> <li>Other ways to use emphasis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can a word be elongated a bit, by drawing out a vowel sound?</li> <li>Is there a gesture that can accompany the word?</li> <li>Can you raise or lower the pitch of your voice on operative words?</li> <li>Give students an example sentence. Have students experiment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<i>If your student's speech sounds robotic or has incorrect emphasis...</i>	individually and on full voice with all the different ways they can make a word stand out from others in that sentence. Then ask for volunteers to share, by demonstration, what they found.
<i>If your student is having trouble making eye contact...</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give them a place to look at just over the heads of audience members. Make sure they have a place in the center and to both the right and left sides of the audience.</li><li>• They can also look at the spaces just between people's heads in the audience. No one will ever know the secret!</li></ul>