**The PVLEGS Basics**

Speaking is a performance-based communicative task.

*How a speech is performed may be more important than how it is built. If the speaker cannot deliver the speech well, no one will ever notice how well it was written. As Chris Witt points out, ‘Knowledge isn’t power; communicating knowledge is.”*

*The most brilliant ideas are worthless if the speaker can’t deliver them.*

In Teen Leadership you spent a semester growing your skills as a speaker. The skills you learned are repackaged in an acronym coined by Erik Palmer – PVLEGS!

**Poise: Calm confidence**

The truth is that all speakers have a degree of nervousness. Even a professional speaker with massive experience will have a heightened level of excitement before a presentation. It is also true that if that nervousness is obvious, listeners can be distracted and miss the point of the speech. This is why the first skill needed in performing a speech is poise. Webster defines poise as an “easy, self-possessed assurance of manner… pleasantly tranquil” (Merriam-Webster 1998, 899). The key to performing a speech is to appear calm and assured even when we may not feel precisely that way (or even remotely close to it).

The skill of poise involves:

* Appearing calm and confident
* Realizing what our annoying habits are and training ourselves to stop them
* Being intentional about stance, movement, and posture

Gain poise by counting slowly to five several times, taking deep breaths with each number. Practice positive self-talk, visualize yourself performing your presentation and of course, PRACTICE!

**Voice: Every word heard**

A good speech is a good conversation magnified. The speaker retains his basic conversational style but uses animation and volume suitable for a larger audience. Be yourself, do not try to imitate any style or person. You should, however, think about your voice. Some people have very loud and harsh voices – it can be tiring to listen to them. Some students are also very quiet – they will need to speak louder to be heard. Become aware of how you sound to avoid such problems.

There are three elements of voice you can work on:

* Volume
* Enunciation
* Avoiding odd vocal patterns like ending each sentence with a questioning tone or fading away at the end of each sentence.

**Life: Insert passion**

Life is about adding emotion to our voices — showing that we actually care about what we’re talking about. Very practically, then, life is about inflecting our voices in a manner that expresses an intended feeling, like excitement, joy, sadness, fear, disappointment, humor, amazement, or anger.

Think about the many ways the phrase, “I don’t think you are wrong” can be spoken to imply subtle shifts in meaning – our voices are powerful tools.

**Eye contact: Engaging each listener**

As a speaker, you need to direct your vision toward the individuals in the audience. Don’t think of it as speaking to a group; you are speaking to many different people. It may seem intimidating to look at each person in the audience, but it is necessary.

There are two key points in eye contact:

* First, you need to work on meeting the gaze of as many people in the audience as you can
* Second, you should familiarize themselves with their speech rather than memorize it. Changing a few words is what happens when you have familiarized yourself with a speech and you can deliver the content repeatedly without losing any of the key ideas. Memorization can leave people sounding robotic or it can leave you feeling stuck if you miss one word.

**Gestures: Matching motions to words**

Watch people in some public places as they converse. Look around at a restaurant or in class. Sit on a bench in the mall and watch people walking by. Sneak a peek at friends a few seats over on the bus. Odds are that as they speak, they are gesturing. Hands move, faces move, and body positions change. This is typical and natural. Sure, some people use gestures more than others do, but it seems that when humans talk, the body moves.

There are three kinds of gestures to become aware of as you speak

* Those with the hands
* Those with the face
* Those with the body (e.g., shoulders, posture).

**Speed: Pacing….not racing**

Excitement, nerves, and the adrenaline rush of showtime lead to increased speed. Giving a speech in front of Mom in the living room is not the same as presenting it to thirty peers in the classroom – your speech time is sure to change as you speak faster.

There are three basic skills related to speed:

* Be conscious of your speed while giving a speech
* Use the speed of the speech to enhance the message (i.e., pacing)
* Pause for effect

Videos on PVLEGS can be viewed at [www.gomlc.com/g4](http://www.gomlc.com/g4)