
Presentation Skills for Teachers
or
What Can Nerds Learn from
Professional Actors?

You've planned, you've prepared –
now you actually have to deliver!

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What can nerds learn from actors ?

- ▶ Managing anxiety/channeling energy
- ▶ Connecting with and engaging an audience
- ▶ Utilizing all communication channels

What can academics learn from
professional actors?

- ▶ **Presence & Energy**
 - ▶ Verbal
 - ▶ Vocal
 - ▶ Visual
- ▶ **Timing**
 - ▶ Suspense & Surprise

} Convey Enthusiasm



Stage Fright?

- ▶ **(Almost) Everyone gets stage-fright**
 - ▶ 77% of all public speakers get it
 - ▶ it can be useful
- ▶ **Acknowledge your fears and their origins**
 - ▶ write them down – and confront them
 - ▶ present to friends, family
- ▶ **Make sure you're prepared**
 - ▶ but make sure that you are rested

Stage Fright: What can academics learn from professional actors?

- ▶ **Warm up, control anxiety**
 - ▶ **Breathing exercises**
 - ▶ warm up your diaphragm & vocal chords
 - ▶ help focus your attention, and relax you
 - ▶ **Tongue Twisters, read-alouds**
 - ▶ warm up your mouth, tongue, voice
- ▶ **Let's try some...**

Breathing exercises help reduce anxiety

- ▶ **Exercise #1:**
 - ▶ Inhale :
 - ▶ Drop forward at the waist – Exhale
 - ▶ roll back up – Inhale
 - ▶ Repeat – making sound as you Inhale.
 - ▶ **Exercise #2**
 - ▶ Play motorcycle – vibrate your lips
 - ▶ **Exercise #3**
 - ▶ Sustain your breath on a hum. Play with the pitch, up and down the scale. Feel the vibrations resonate through your body.
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Utilize Verbal, Vocal and Visual Channels

Of all the information received by an audience:

- ▶ $\frac{1}{3}$ is from verbal reception
- ▶ $\frac{2}{3}$ is from nonverbal reception

If the verbal and non-verbal info do not agree – your audience will remember the non verbal.

Your word choices can support or detract from your *message*

- ▶ Verbal
 - ▶ Choose your words carefully
 - ▶ Choose your phrasing wisely

Some common phrases are better than others

Avoid

- ▶ “Now I’d like to...”
 - ▶ Presenter-focused (I don’t care what you want – here’s what I want)
 - ▶ Vague and indefinite (just do it, already)

Instead Use

- ▶ “We’re going to talk about...”
- ▶ “Let’s look at...”

Some common phrases are better than others

Avoid

- ▶ “I’ll tell you very quickly...”
 - ▶ “The details aren’t important”
 - ▶ “This is easy”
 - ▶ “You should already know this” (always follow this statement with a comment re what someone should do if s/he doesn’t)
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The *way* you say things can support or detract from your message

*Make effective use of the **Vocal Channel***

- ▶ Adjust *tone, speed, volume*
 - ▶ Example
 - ▶ Modulate for *meaning, **complexity**, importance*
 - ▶ Avoid filler words and phrases:
 - ▶ “you know”, “um”, “well”, “uh”, “like”
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Your *presence* can support or detract from your message

You are a visual

- ▶ Establish presence: stance, position
 - ▶ Use posture, motion, gestures wisely
 - ▶ Reduce body *noise*
 - ▶ Avoid small gestures
 - ▶ Make eye contact (“W”)
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Use Suspense and Surprise to Engage Your Audience

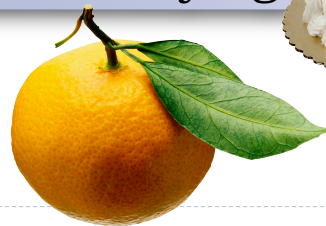
- ▶ Utilize questions
 - ▶ Why does the earth stay in orbit around the sun?
 - ▶ What is the probability that 2 people in the room have the same birthday?
 - ▶ What is “heavy” about heavy water?
 - ▶ Use demos/visuals
 - ▶ Ask students to predict outcomes – “vest” them in the answer
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Don't give anyone
in your audience
a reason
NOT to hear
what you are saying.



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Fall 2012

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