



UNDERSTANDING VOCAL VARIETY

LEVEL 3 PROJECT



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INTRODUCTION



Your greatest tool as a speaker is your voice. The best public speakers recognize when to raise or lower their voices, how to use silence to add impact, and the value of varying their pace as they present to an audience. With time and practice, every Toastmaster can become skilled at using her voice to move an audience.

In this project, you will learn to recognize the impact of vocal variety and identify changes in pitch, tone, volume, and pace when listening to a speaker. You will learn when and how to effectively adjust pitch, tone, volume, and pace to emphasize different sections of a speech and use vocal variety to enhance a presentation. You will demonstrate knowledge of personal vocal variety patterns, adjust them to meet the needs of audience members, and improve the quality of a speech.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to practice using vocal variety to enhance a speech.

Overview: Learn or review the importance of vocal variety. Use the exercises in this project to improve your vocal variety skills. Then, present a 5- to 7-minute speech on any topic at a club meeting. The primary focus of the evaluation is your vocal variety.

For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist on page 11.



Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



Video: Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



Interactive Activity: Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



Resource: Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.

ASSESS YOUR SKILLS

Evaluate your current skill level by rating each statement.



Select the appropriate number based on your skills today:

5
EXEMPLARY

4
EXCEL

3
ACCOMPLISHED

2
EMERGING

1
DEVELOPING

Pre-Project					Statement	Post-Project				
5	4	3	2	1	I recognize the impact of vocal variety.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I am able to identify changes in pitch, tone, volume, and pace when listening to a speaker.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I am able to effectively adjust pitch, tone, volume, and pace to emphasize different sections of a speech.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I am able to use vocal variety to enhance a speech.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I am aware of my personal vocal variety patterns.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I know how to adjust my vocal patterns to meet the needs of an audience and improve the quality of a speech.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I recognize how this project applies to my life outside of Toastmasters.	5	4	3	2	1

COMPETENCIES

The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.

- Recognize the impact of vocal variety on audience members' reception of a presentation.
- Identify changes in pitch, tone, volume, and pace when listening to a speaker.
- Effectively adjust pitch, tone, volume, and pace to emphasize different sections of a speech.
- Use vocal variety to enhance a speech.
- Demonstrate knowledge of personal vocal variety patterns and adjust them to meet the needs of audience members and improve the quality of a speech.

UNDERSTANDING VOCAL VARIETY

An outstanding public speaker is very engaging. These people make you forget where you are and what you were thinking before they took the stage. They are intriguing, entertaining, interesting, and in the end, you gain from what they shared with you, even if it is just a funny story. Aside from a well-crafted speech, compelling speakers take full advantage of their voices.

Vocal variety is more than sound or quality. It is how a speaker uses silence and pace to build tension or add impact. Each presenter has a unique way of varying his voice. The variations are components of vocal variety.

Specifically, vocal variety is made up of pitch, tone, volume, and pace. When you present a speech, effective use of vocal variety is essential to connect you with audience members and make every word impactful.

PITCH, TONE, VOLUME, AND PACE



PITCH

The pitch of your voice is how high or low it sounds. Though every speaker has a range of pitches when they speak, some tend to default to a low, deep voice with a booming pitch while others tend toward a high voice with a gentle or shrill quality.

While there is no absolute correct pitch for public speaking, it can be helpful to extend your pitch. This is particularly important for individuals with a narrow range who may sound monotone. Monotone means the pitch of a voice is always the same. Other speakers have a wide range in pitch.

Speak Aloud

Select any group of words to say aloud. You may choose to practice an upcoming speech, select a poem, or read the words on this screen.

Start Comfortably

Read or say the words at your most comfortable pitch, but keep the pitch the same. This should sound like you are playing one note on a musical instrument.

Change Pitch

After thirty seconds to a minute, change your pitch. You may choose a higher or lower pitch, whichever appeals to you. Read or say the same selection at this pitch for thirty seconds to a minute.

Repeat

Do the exercise several times to move up and down your vocal range (all of the different pitches at which you are comfortable speaking).

Broaden Range

Extend your range by completing this exercise and reaching higher and lower than you normally would. The broader your range, the easier it will be for you to vary your voice as you speak.

TONE

Your tone is the emotion behind the sound of your voice. It is the quality that tells an audience how you feel about the words you are saying. Your tone will tell the audience when you are happy, sad, excited, or any number of emotions you can have about the material you are conveying.

Communicate with tone. Use the following exercise to practice speaking using different tones.

- Select any short sentence, such as, "My grandmother arrives on Friday."
- Say the sentence in a neutral tone.
- Say the same sentence as if you are very excited.
- Say it again as if you are afraid.
- Repeat the sentence several times using different tones. Try joyful, sad, secretive, and terrified.
- Practice in front of a mirror or video record yourself to hear and see the impact of your tone. Practice tone by saying the sentence in many different ways.



VOLUME

When you speak, your volume affects many things. First and foremost, your volume impacts your ability to be heard. When your voice is too quiet for the room or setting, your audience will struggle to hear you. If you tend to speak in a loud, booming voice, audience members may be too distracted to listen to the content of your speech.

Emphasis

Your volume can be a tool used to emphasize words or sections of your speech. Shouting in the middle of a speech with an otherwise consistent volume can have an impact—a whisper may be even more powerful.

Achieving the best volume level for each speech takes practice and feedback. Outstanding public speakers practice volume levels to make sure they can be heard and to make effective use of the loudness or softness of their voice.

Practice

Use the following exercise to practice speaking using different volume levels.

- Work with a partner.
- Stand at one end of a room and have your partner stand at the other.
- Begin speaking (say anything you choose).
- Keep your voice quiet at the beginning and slowly increase in volume.
- When your partner can hear you, she should raise her hand.
- Speak at that volume for a few seconds and begin lowering your voice.
- Your partner will drop her hand when she can no longer hear you.

PACE

A speaker's pace is the speed at which he speaks. Many speakers, when they begin their Toastmasters journey, speak too fast or too slow. A speaker whose pace is too fast is difficult to understand. Speakers who tend to speak at a slow or plodding pace often lose audience members' interest in their speech.

For many people the pace at which they speak is affected by nervousness. When speaking in front of an audience causes you to feel anxious or uncomfortable, it may help to focus on your pace.

Once speakers are able to keep their pace from being affected by anxiety, it can become another powerful tool of expression. Like the other forms of vocal variety, a speaker's pace can create or enhance emotion in audience members and add to the overall quality of a presentation.

Adjust Your Pace

Use the following exercise to practice adjusting the pace of your speech.

Select A Piece of Writing

You may choose a children's book, a newspaper, or a magazine article. It may be effective for you to use a speech that you have presented in the past or one that is upcoming.

Review

Take a few minutes to read and familiarize yourself with the material.

Say it Aloud

Read the text aloud at a comfortable volume.

Add Power and Interest

After you have read it aloud once, identify sections that could be more powerful or effective at a different pace. For example, identify sections to read with a slower pace. Mark sections to read faster.

Practice

Read the same selection several times, speeding up your speech and slowing it down. Pay close attention to the effect of your pace. If possible, complete this exercise with a partner or create a video recording. You will benefit from feedback on the impact of changes in your pace.

TAKE A BREATH

When people are nervous or worried their breathing can become shallow. This can present a serious problem for people who are about to present a speech to an audience. When speakers are winded or breathless from nerves they lose volume, have a higher pitch, and are often difficult to understand.

Making time to take a few deep breaths before you begin a speech will help in two ways. The first, and probably most important, is that deep breaths can lower anxiety and help a speaker relax. The second is that a speaker who has plenty of air will have better control of her voice.

A deep breath that fills your lungs will move your stomach and not raise your shoulders. To practice taking deep breaths:

- Stand or lie down.
- Place your hands on your stomach.
- Relax your shoulders.
- Take a deep breath. Make sure your shoulders stay level and feel your stomach move out as you inhale.
- Exhale slowly. Repeat the exercise any time.

You can use this exercise at any time to help you relax before a speech. Practicing will help you understand how your body is affected when it is well-oxygenated.

Speak aloud after taking several deep breaths. Notice how your voice sounds and feels when you have plenty of air. Remember the feeling to help you the next time you have a presentation.



REVIEW AND APPLY

Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- In what ways can you use vocal variety to express emotion?
- Describe how tone can be used to change the meaning of a sentence.
- Why is it important to consider your volume when you speak?
- How can pacing enhance your message?
- How does the pitch of your voice affect your speech?
- In what ways can breathing exercises help you be a better public speaker?

COMPLETE YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report.

Review: Return to page 3 to review your assignment.



Organize: Use the Project Checklist on page 11 to review the steps and add your own. This will help you organize and prepare your assignment.

Schedule: Work with the vice president education to schedule your speech.



Prepare: Prepare for your evaluation. Review the Speech Profile on pages 13–14 and share it with your evaluator before your speech. You may choose to share your Speech Profile online.

PROJECT CHECKLIST

Understanding Vocal Variety

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to practice using vocal variety to enhance a speech.

Overview: Learn or review the importance of vocal variety. Use the exercises in this project to improve your vocal variety skills. Then, present a 5- to 7-minute speech on any topic at a club meeting. The primary focus of the evaluation is your vocal variety.

This project includes:

- A 5- to 7-minute speech

Below are tasks you will need to complete for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You may alter the following list to incorporate any other tasks necessary for your project.

Review the Speech Profile resource.

Select any topic of your choosing.

Schedule your speech with the vice president education.

Write your speech.

Rehearse your speech.

SPEECH PROFILE

The evaluation for this project is different from other evaluations in Toastmasters Pathways. For this project, you will complete a speech profile. The Speech Profile resource is designed to identify vocal variety skills the speaker uses effectively and those that can be improved.

Member Name _____ Date _____

Evaluator _____ Speech Length: 5 – 7 minutes

Speech Title _____

Purpose Statement

- The purpose of this project is for the member to practice using vocal variety to enhance a speech.

Notes for the Evaluator

During the completion of this project, the member spent time developing or improving his or her vocal variety.

About this speech:

- The member will present a well-organized speech on any topic.
- Listen for how the member uses his or her voice to communicate and enhance the speech.
- The speech may be humorous, informational, or any style the member chooses.
- The speech is not a report on the content of the “Understanding Vocal Variety” project.
- Use the Speech Profile resource to complete your evaluation.

General Comments

You excelled at:

You may want to work on:

To challenge yourself:

For the evaluator: Indicate your rating of each characteristic from ineffective to effective by circling the appropriate dot on the scale.

INEFFECTIVE

EFFECTIVE

Loudness or Volume:

Too quiet—Too loud • • • • ●
 Flat—Too expressive • • • • ●

Loudness or Volume:

Good projection
 Vibrant and dynamic

Pitch:

Too high—Too low • • • • ●
 Shrill • • • • ●

Pitch:

Successfully varied
 Full

Voice Quality:

Nasal—Breathy • • • • ●
 Harsh, raspy • • • • ●
 Lifeless • • • • ●

Voice Quality:

Open
 Mellow, comfortable
 Enthusiastic, engaging

Articulation (Word Usage):

Mumbling • • • • ●
 Mispronunciations • • • • ●
 Poor pausing choices • • • • ●

Articulation (Word Usage):

Clear articulation
 Correct pronunciation
 Effective use of pauses

Timing or Rate:

Jerky • • • • ●
 Slow, plodding—Fast, racing • • • • ●
 Unvaried • • • • ●
 Hesitant • • • • ●
 High speed • • • • ●

Timing or Rate:

Smooth
 Fluent
 Varied, exciting
 Deliberate
 Fluent

Vocal Variety:

Emotionless—Exaggerated emotions • • • • ●
 Unfriendly • • • • ●
 Strained • • • • ●

Vocal Variety:

Conveys emotion well
 Genial
 Natural



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