

# Vocal Coaches Practice Tips

## *I. When to Practice*

- A. In Bible Class**
- B. Speaker prep with chaplains/Bible teachers/staff member, plus pastors of host churches—you may wish to have class time practice once per week, and another evening at the church.**
- C. Parents may also coach, if agreeable.**
- D. Students should practice on their own in addition to what is done during class—particularly if the formal prep is only once per week.**

## *II. Where to Practice*

- A. It is likely that the classroom will be too small to accommodate multiple speakers all practicing out loud at once. You need a bigger space/spaces to rehearse.**
- B. At a school, music rooms, chapels, gymnasiums, hall ways, etc. may all be employed for this purpose. In a church, several Sabbath school rooms, the main sanctuary, and speakers in different hallways will work.**
- C. The main thing is that during practice there is space for all to have a podium for their notes, be able to stand on their feet, and to be actually speaking the sermon out loud for the majority of the time.**
- D. The practice spaces need to be close enough together so the vocal coaches can move from one speaker to the next listening in and giving suggestions. More than one coach means more personalized attention to each speaker.**
- E. Spaces for practice should be identified and set up as much as possible in advance to allow fullest use of rehearsal time.**

## *III. How to Practice*

Each training session gives stand up practice on a single essentials of presentation from a manuscript. One new skill is taught per session, with former skills referred to as needed in later sessions. A key

**matter in all sessions is the ongoing reading of the manuscripts aloud until they become familiar. If a manuscript is too long to be completed in a single session, take up the reading by section in later sessions so that all is covered.**

**The skills necessary for public speaking which should be taught one essential per session include:**

**1. Session One: Spiritual Preparation and Getting Started**

- **Preaching a sermon is more than giving a speech. It is consciously working with unseen powers for the salvation of others.**
- **We have a part to do that no one else can do—not even angels. That is to speak the Word of God to others.**
- **The Holy Spirit and the angels have a part to do that is beyond our capability. They impress our hearts and the hearts of our listeners with the importance of the message presented.**
- **Ellen White notes that normally we each have a guardian angel. But when we gather as a group to work to win people to Jesus, we are each assigned an extra angel. As we take up this work, we need to understand we are working with unseen powers.**
- **Similar to an angler fish that lives in a coral reef. It looks like a chunk of coral and has a small bit that jigs in the water in front of its eyes and mouth. A small fish come to investigate is suddenly swallowed. God and the angels are the fish, the unseen part of the team. We are the little bit that is visible. We play our part, but far more is going on in winning people than what we do ourselves.**
- **Part of spiritual preparation is reading your manuscript thoroughly enough so that you understand it and can communicate its contents.**
- **In addition to prayer before practice, you may choose to do something symbolic to invite God's presence and acknowledge your need of His help while you practice. Taking off your shoes and preaching in your socks is a concrete and Biblical means of acknowledging and inviting**

**God's presence. Moses and Joshua both employed this as a sign of reverence in God's presence.**

***Tasks:***

- A. Get your own copy of sermon in folder you will preach from.**
- B. Stand behind a pulpit/podium and begin reading through the manuscript aloud.**
- C. Begin marking with a pencil any words you are unfamiliar with the meaning or pronunciation of.**
- D. Be sure you have identified all words and found their proper meaning and pronunciation by next session—ask anyone you wish for help.**
- E. Make sure you have your personal copy of the sermon manuscript with you at class every time.**

**2. Session Two: Proper Pronunciation—knowing what you are saying and how to say it properly**

- Read through your manuscript out loud from beginning to end.**
- Make sure you know how to correctly pronounce every word and understand its meaning.**
- Underline any words you need to look up or ask someone how to pronounce.**
- Some words in a person's reading vocabulary are not in their speaking vocabulary.**
- Minor adjustments to manuscript are acceptable.**
- Coaches and listeners note mispronunciations and words that need work where speaker may miss them.**

***Tasks:***

- A. Complete reading through your entire manuscript from beginning to end.**
- B. Identify all words and know how to pronounce them.**
- C. Know the meaning of all the words.**
- D. Makes such minor adjustments as are needed.**

### **3. Session Three: Projection—speaking loudly and clearly enough to be heard easily over a distance**

- Coaches and listeners sit close to begin with, then move back progressively.
- If they cannot clearly hear the speaker, they clap their hands to signal that the speaker needs to increase their volume.
- Speaker increases volume and projection until they can be heard clearly the full length of a hall, across the gym, or from the back pew of the church sanctuary. They should be able to be heard without a microphone for a distance of 60-100+ feet.

#### *Tasks:*

- A. Learning to speak loudly enough to be heard easily at a distance.
- B. Learning to speak clearly enough to be heard easily at a distance.
- C. Responding to clap signals of coaches in increasing volume and clarity.

### **4. Session Four: Eye Contact**

- Eye contact with your audience is essential to maintaining a connection with them throughout your presentation.
- Eye contact is only possible as you practice your manuscript often enough to know it well.
- You may put your finger on the place on the page where you are reading from to allow you to find it again easily when you glance down.
- Eye contact should be directed to various places in your congregation.
- Eye contact should occur regularly, every sentence or two.
- To begin with, eye contact must be intentionally practiced, particularly when you are still becoming familiar with your manuscript

#### *Skills:*

- A. Pick two or three places you will glance toward during your presentation. All in that area of seating will feel as though you are looking at them.

- B. Listen for the coaches/listeners. They will snap their fingers to remind you to look up at them if you have not done so in a few sentences.**
- C. Keep one finger on your place on the page so you can glance up and find your spot again when you look down.**

## **5. Session Five: Gestures and Props**

- There are two kinds of gestures: 1) appropriate gestures that add to your meaning 2) inappropriate nervous mannerisms that detract from your speaking**
- The larger your audience, the broader your gestures need to be in order to be visible.**
- Look for places in your manuscript where gestures may prove helpful, and write those gestures in the margin, or draw pictures to help remind you of them.**
- Some will use more gestures than others naturally as a part of their personality. All should use some gestures, and those gestures should enhance the meaning of specific things you are saying.**
- Nervous gestures may include tossing the hair from your eyes repeatedly, pushing up your glasses, tapping a finger or hand, rocking back and forth.**
- The use of props may be indicated in some presentations. In others, you may see opportunity to enhance your presentation through their use. Prepare them carefully. Practice their use.**

### ***Skills:***

- A. Identify any nervous gestures you may have and eliminate them with the help of your coach/listeners.**
- B. Identify several places in your manuscript where planned gestures may enhance the content of your message.**
- C. Write in gestures you intend to employ in pencil and practice them.**
- D. Determine and prepare any props you may need to enhance your presentation.**

## **6. Pacing and Inflection—Speaking Like a River Flows**

- **To avoid sounding monotonous, you need to intentionally alter how fast you speak, and how high and low your tones are when you speak.**
- **A river doesn't flow the same pace continuously. At times it goes quickly over rapids. Other times it moves more placidly. At times, it may even thunder over a waterfall. Consider the pacing of the various parts of your presentation to reflect what is being said.**
- **Allow voice to rise and fall to avoid “drone”.**
- **Over pronounce words.**
- **Consider places where pauses are most effective and appropriate.**
- **Turn up the “drama” by use of your voice to reinforce the meaning of the words you are saying.**

### *Skills:*

- A. To add variety and modulation to the voice.**
- B. To make sermon sound “told” rather than “read”.**
- C. To use appropriate pacing and pauses.**

## **7. Use of Microphone**

- **This may require more than one session to allow all presenters to participate.**
- **Consider the appropriate placement of the microphone to allow it to pick up the voice of the presenter/presenters.**
- **Need not to be “afraid of the mic”. It is your friend, lean close to it. It will allow you more control over inflection and greater ease in being heard.**
- **If possible use microphone in the location where you will be speaking—adjusting it as needed.**
- **Do not fear speaking too loudly, as the sound people can always turn your microphone down as needed.**
- **Be sure you have a place to stand that will allow you to see and be seen and to be close enough to the microphone to be easily heard.**
- **Make whatever adjustments are needed to allow a clear sound for speaking.**

- **You have something important to say. You must be heard clearly. Do all that is necessary for this to occur, with the microphone as an aid.**

*Skills:*

- A. Adding the use of the microphone to the already practiced projection of the voice.**
- B. Becoming familiar with speaking into the microphone you will actually be using in making your presentations, if possible.**
- C. Making sure you are close enough to the microphone to be heard clearly.**

**8. Stage Decorum: People Start Judging You as a Speaker Before You Ever Begin to Talk**

- **Consider carefully dressing for your presentation appropriately—you represent your school, your church, your family, and God Himself.**
- **Normally the speaker should be dressed a little more formally than the audience.**
- **Consider and practice entering and exiting the platform.**
- **Remember you are “on stage” and being observed from the time you arrive until the time you leave your speaking location.**
- **Consider modesty, cleanliness, and grooming.**
- **When sitting on the platform, sit up straight, don’t cross your legs. Don’t fidget. Look at the speaker or singer. Participate in what is going on.**
- **Make sure you are not a distraction from what is going on.**

*Skills:*

- A. Decide what you will wear during your presentation.**
- B. Discuss any basic requirements for dress to allow all speakers to be appropriately attired.**
- C. Practice getting on and off stage.**
- D. Identify appropriate and inappropriate decorum while entering and sitting in front of your audience.**
- E. Consider overall deportment from arrival at the presentation site until you leave for all session.**

**—appropriate entry/exit, clothing, behavior before and after meetings begin**

*Final Notes:*

**The success of the meetings will be determined to a large degree by the preparations made in advance. A pint of sweat before the battle saves a gallon of blood during battle. To a great measure, the success or failure of the students' presentations will be determined before the first ever speaks into the pulpit.**

**In addition to the weekly training session, all students should be encouraged to read through their sermon aloud once per day—or as often as possible. They may choose to record their presentation and listen to it. *The oftener each presenter goes through his/her material, the more familiar and natural it will be to present it.* Where a Bible class is being used for prep, additional time devoted to live practice is most helpful—in fact, daily practice as the primary use of class time is most helpful if possible—particularly the first year a school does a series.**