

Public Speaker

Cadette *aMAZE* badge

The call it stage presence: the ability to be yourself and make a connection with people – even a crowd of people – and seem comfortable the entire time. A great presenters' talent for conveying their points clearly and powerfully is useful everywhere, not just in politics or on the stage. Luckily, you don't have to be born with these skills; you can develop them. In this badge, start the process!

Steps

1. Get a feel for performing solo
2. Focus on body language
3. Find your voice
4. Choose or create a piece to perform
5. Get onstage!

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll have found my inner performer and be unafraid to speak up.

TIP Before TAKEOFF:

For any or all of these steps, think about inviting someone to share their tricks of the trade with you, and network with them for ideas and support. What about a:

- School drama teacher
- Community-theater actor or director
- Parent or group volunteer who's done some performing or speaking in public
- Someone who gives presentations at their job

Careers to Explore

- Stage actor
- Politician
- Performance artist
- Drama or speech teacher
- Salesperson
- Motivational speaker
- Speechwriter
- School teacher
- Coach
- Lawyer
- Judge
- Ombudsperson
- Linguist
- Speech pathologist
- Deejay
- Storyteller
- Public-relations specialist
- Press secretary
- Emcee
- Audiobook actor
- Voice-over actor
- Sportscaster
- News anchor

Step 1 Get a feel for performing solo

Here's your chance to try performing alone. If you're comfortable reading to friends or family, go for it! If you'd rather build your skills first, deliver one of these pieces in front of a mirror or into a recorder to hear how you sound. (You can see how much you've grown by comparing these practice runs with your final badge performance.)

CHOICES - DO ONE:

Read aloud one monologue from three different plays. A monologue is a long, uninterrupted speech by one actor. Find here plays you like and choose a long part to read.

OR

Read aloud two political speeches. Perhaps they could be about the same issues but from different viewpoints, or great speeches from history. The American Rhetoric website is a good resource.

OR

Read aloud three poems or one short story. You can look for pieces performed at poetry jams or by famous storytellers.

Step 2 Focus on body language

Has a friend ever said, "I'm not mad at you," but you didn't believe them? It probably wasn't what they said, but how they said it. Words are only part of a performance - facial expressions and body movements are just as important. Do at least one of these exercises, focusing on your face and body movements.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

Get a group together and play charades. Take note of the clues you and others give that work and those that don't. During the game be at least eight different things.

OR

Videotape yourself miming one animal, one famous person, and one action. Watch it back to see if you were convincing in your role.

FOR MORE FUN: Make this a game to play with others!

OR

Pretend an item is something else. Do this in a group: pick up a simple prop, such as a wooden spoon, a cardboard box, or a cup, and act as if it's something else. Each time the item is passed to a new person, it becomes a new thing, and the rest of the group guesses what it is. Use at least eight different props.

More to Explore

Attend a solo performance. It might be a speech, debate, solo play, poetry jam, or storyteller's circle. When listening watch the performer's face and body movements closely. How did the performer hold the audience's attention? Did they make use of props, hand gestures, or stage movements?

Step 3 Find your voice

Get into more than the words – consider the emotion you're portraying, the inflection and tone, even the accent you might use. Practice projecting your voice so your audience can hear you clearly. When you do one of these exercises record it to evaluate on your own, or do it for others and ask for feedback.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Repeat one word one sentence, and one passage four times. Try to communicate a different emotion each of the four times you say them – for instance, excited, embarrassed, lonely, and surprised.

FOR MORE FUN: Pick examples that are difficult to say – words like “chiropractor” and “specificity.” For sentences, what about tongue twisters? Passages might come from 19th-century political speeches.

OR

Tell your own story, from birth until now, in 60 seconds. First, tell it as a simple story. Then use your tone and inflection to make it into a drama. Last, make it a comedy.

OR

Practice impressions of three famous people. Choose people you consider interesting. Find movies interviews, or other media to listen to. Then observe each voice carefully. When does it rise and fall? Is it high and squeaky or low and deep?

FOR MORE FUN: Do the impressions for a group and see who can guess who you are!

More to Explore

Pretend you're a Cadette in 1963. As girls did to earn their Radio and Television badge, prepare a radio program on Girl Scouting featuring news or drama. Include sound effects. For step 5, do your program with a live audience – and record it to share.

Step 4 Choose or create a piece to perform

Now that you're getting comfortable speaking it's time to find something to say! Whether you choose an existing piece for this step or write your own, it should be at least 500 words.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

Write a speech about something in which you believe. In this case, the character you're playing is you. The focus is your message. Do you want to persuade your audience to support a cause or to take action? What kind of tone should you use? How can you couple your voice and gestures to educate and inspire?

OR

Create a piece for a character. Choose a character you'd like to play and write a monologue as if you were that character. Maybe you'd like to be Queen Victoria, a TV news reporter, or a super-confident hip-hop star with a great cause. You can take on any role you like, so let your imagination go wild!

OR

Pick an existing piece. You can find monologues in many plays or you could choose a passage from a story you love. Although you haven't written it, you'll bring it to life, so you'll have to think about pacing, voice, and gestures... If you want to perform a published piece, be sure to ask a drama teacher if you need to pay royalties. (These are fees play-publishing companies charge for use of their material.)

Step 5 Get onstage!

Make it big or keep it small - it's time to get in the spotlight!

CHOICES - DO ONE:

Create a theater in your own home. Perform for Girl Scout friends or family.

OR

Perform at school. Ask your teacher if you can perform in front of the class, perhaps for extra credit. If you're feeling brave and have prepared a speech you want the student body to hear, perhaps you can speak at an assembly.

OR

Go to your audience. Depending on your topic, there could be a particular group you'd like to educate and inspire. Take your show to them!

More to Explore

Make it a group performance. Gather five or six girls who want to perform as soloists and do a show for your group's parents, school, or community. Perhaps each girl shares her perspective on the same topic? Or all the speakers could talk around the same theme – the environment, navigating relationships, or why your group sells cookies.

Success as a storyteller depends on being about to hold the member of her audience from beginning to end; to make them forget that they are sitting on the hard ground or floor and to take them along with her into whatever realm the tale leads.

-Girl Scout Handbook, 1933

Tips for Preparation and Memorization

The more senses you involve the quicker and better you will learn your lines, speech, or monologue. So speak them, hear them, and read them as you write them. And, as usual, it's all about practice.

Run your lines. Say them as often as you can – over and over and over.

Whenever possible, say your lines out loud, the way you will deliver them.

Whenever possible, too, move around as you would onstage while saying your lines.

Record them and listen to them – over and over and over.

Break down your piece into bits and learn one act, scene or speech at a time.

Write your lines on index cards and quiz yourself.

Tips on Taming Stage Fright

Look good, but more important, feel good. Dress in something that makes you feel comfortable and that you believe looks good on you.

Visualize

yourself going through your performance easily breezily, and getting a standing ovation.

Face your fears,

Don't fear your fears! Thinking worrisome thoughts and admitting them out loud just makes you more nervous. It's easy to focus on perceived shortcomings: My voice is too high, my hands won't stay still. Yet, for every item generally perceived as "bad" you can find someone who's made it big despite (sometimes because of) it! And why do we have a tendency to concentrate on our worries? Those who succeed spend more time taking stock of that at which they are good.

Know your audience, and know that your audience is wishing you well. Pick out a friend whose face reminds you of that fact and makes you feel comfortable.

Laugh it off! Don't let mistakes get the better of you. Move through them, staying confident, and you will connect with your audience.

Practice, practice, practice. Nothing dilutes nervousness like being 100 percent prepared.

Forget about you the person and concentrate on what you have to say.

Prepare physically as well as mentally. Get a good night's sleep not just the night before, but the night before the night before (that makes the most difference in how you feel!). Eat a good breakfast, and, just before your show have something with protein and not too much sugar.

Relaxation Techniques

You'd be amazed how many seasoned performers say they suffer from stage fright. Many do relaxation rituals just before taking the stage, such as a brisk walk outside, yoga exercises, deep breathing, toe touches, and arm circles.

Try the "quick relax" (also a great way to get yourself to sleep at night): from toes to head, body part by body part (think fingers, palms, wrists . . .), clench, wiggle, and relax. On the "relax" part, think of that body part getting very heavy and sinking into the floor chair, or mattress (if you are going to sleep). You get the idea!

Take time-outs, breathe, walk, gesture, gesture big, take a drink of water-all before you go onstage and while you are onstage.

(Do move, don't fidget!)

Add the Badge to Your Journey

Speaking in public is a powerful way to connect with others. Giving a speech can also be an amazing opportunity to spread peace. Use the skills you gain in this badge to educate and inspire others with your words.

Not that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Putting on an inspiring show with Girl Scout sisters
- Giving a speech about a cause I care about
- Confidently volunteering to be in a school or community play

I'm inspired to.

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