

COACHING GUIDE: RESOURCE 7

10 Techniques to Promote Confidence and Early Success

When learning any new skill, it is important to feel successful along the way.

If too much time passes before you feel any improvement, the experience of learning something new can be daunting and overwhelming. Coaches can help promote confidence by helping students experience small victories and success as early as possible, while continuing to guide development and improvement.

- 1. Make it a Game, Not a Test.** Start out with speaking-related activities before turning to instruction. Set the tone that this is going to be a fun, interactive experience and avoid too many restrictions on how people should participate, especially at the beginning.
- 2. Use Familiar Activities with a Twist.** Add a public speaking component to familiar activities like Simon Says (i.e. Simon has to use direct eye contact) or scavenger hunts (i.e. the group has to present out about their findings).
- 3. Incorporate Activities Requiring Little Preparation.** Help students avoid overthinking something by doing activities that require little thought or preparation, like easy warm-ups.
- 4. Connect to Preferred Modes of Interaction.** Once you know what students like, start off with their preferences first and then gradually introduce new skills (i.e. starting with art or physical activities and then introducing more writing tasks).
- 5. Give Multiple Choices.** Let students choose what works best for them by giving choices about elements like topics, how they want to prepare, or whether they want to present sitting or standing. Gradually restrict choices and increase difficulty over time.
- 6. Encourage Collaboration.** Remind people that working with others is not a weakness and encourage them to ask for help. Have people prepare remarks in pairs or groups if that helps.
- 7. Chunk Tasks to Encourage Repetition.** Regular run-throughs and repetition drives improved speaking. Make sure tasks or activities are short enough so that students can have several “do-overs” as they rehearse and practice.
- 8. Prioritize Positive Feedback.** At the beginning, spend more time on giving specific positive feedback to help students build self-awareness of their strengths. When asking the audience to give feedback, restrict feedback only to questions like, “What was memorable about the speech? What resonated with you?” Gradually add in opportunities for specific critique.
- 9. Build Awareness of Skills.** Students often do not know what they are good at, especially with public speaking. Articulate what you notice about their skills and encourage them to do the same for others.
- 10. Narrow Perceived Issues.** To avoid overwhelm, students need help getting specific about what they need to work on. Tackle broad statements like, “I am just bad at this”, by talking through their strengths and helping them articulate perceived issues and areas of discomfort using precise and narrow language (i.e. “I need to work on the beginnings of my speeches, but I am fine once I get started”).

