

# PRESENTATION GUIDE: RESOURCE 13

## Acting Techniques to Improve Public Speaking

**Acting requires a performer to make clear choices about their motivations and intentions and how they plan to communicate them to an audience.**

When public speakers are clear about who they are talking to and why, it can help them connect with their audiences and connect emotionally to their content (rather than just stating lines). Similar to acting, public speakers also have to make some clear technical choices about their movements, vocal colors, and how they will break up ideas with pauses and shifts in tone. The clearer the choice, the stronger the performance – the goal is to take risks and own your choices, not be “middle of the road”.

### “Character” Choices

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who am I in this context?
- Who am I talking to?
- What is my relationship to my audience?
- Why am I talking? What is my motivation?

### Technical Choices

Ask yourself the following questions:

- How are my ideas broken up? Where are the transitions between ideas?
- What is the purpose of different lines/paragraphs? Where are there big shifts in emotion and tone?
- What color choices best fit my content? (see colors described under “Vocal Technique for Presenters”)
- What is my overall “speed”? (speed refers to how fast I speak and move my hands)
- What is my overall “weight”? (weight refers to how light or heavy I feel when I speak)
- What is my overall “directness”? (directness refers to how intensely I focus my eye contact on a given focal point)
- Where are my pauses and silences? Where is it necessary to take a moment and take more time for a reaction?
- Will it be necessary to move around or “block”? If so, when and where will I move?

### Preparation Checklist:

- Read through your script material.
- On the top of the page, write brief answers to:  
1) Who am I? 2) Who am I talking to? 3) What is our relationship? 4) What is my motivation? If it isn't clear, make it up and make sure it is a clear choice.
- Bracket how the ideas are broken up. Note any big shifts in emotion and tone and transitions between ideas. Sometimes, this can be large paragraphs, but sometimes, it might be a single line. Make notes on the side to remind yourself.
- Write down the emotions and vocal tone colors that logically go with each bracket.
- Add slashes to note any big pauses or silences.
- Note down any planned movement or blocking.
- Practice! Revise your choices if it doesn't feel right. Remember that your goal is to make choices that best communicate the overall purpose of the content and own it!

