

Vocal Foundations

Vocal Delivery & Conversational Techniques

Live Seminar Companion — Extended version available inside the community

10 sections. 3 practice drills.

Everything the live session covered — plus the material there was no time for.

Written to be understood on the first read. No jargon left unexplained.

Watch the recording, then work through this. Or read it standalone — both work.

20/80 RULE

7/38/55

VOCAL ELEMENTS

DRILLS

THE FRAME

MIRRORING

LABELING

ETHICS

PRACTICE REPS

2026 ROADMAP

Frameworks and principles — never scripts to memorise.

Skills are built with people. Come build them at ENL.PRO

Before You Begin

This is the written companion to the live seminar. It follows the same sequence as the session, so you can read it alongside the recording, use it as a refresher afterwards, or work through it entirely on its own. Nothing here assumes you were in the room.

It also contains a substantial amount of material the live session did not have time for. Wherever you see a **BONUS** block, that content is new — the failure modes, the calibration details, the drills, and the reasoning underneath the techniques. Those blocks are where most of the depth lives.

Three things worth saying up front

- **Every sample line is an illustration, not a script.** The example language exists to show you the *shape* of a move — where it sits in a conversation, what it sounds like, what it is doing. Memorising the words is the fastest way to sound synthetic. Learn the principle and let your own words carry it.
- **This is a skills document, not a knowledge document.** Reading it will take you about forty minutes. Being able to do any of it takes reps. Section 09 exists specifically to give you a safe way to get those reps.
- **Any vocabulary you have not met before is explained where it appears.** If a term feels like insider language, that is a failure of the writing, not of your background.

How the guide is built

Sections 01 to 05 cover the foundations — how you sound and the frame you operate from. Sections 06 and 07 cover the two advanced techniques, mirroring and labeling. Section 08 is the ethical filter that keeps all of it trustworthy. Section 09 is your practice plan, and Section 10 shows where this fits in the wider curriculum.

Work in order the first time. After that, treat it as a reference — the sections stand alone.

— *Kris, Essential Nova Labs*

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Page numbers refer to the printed page shown in the footer.

The four blocks

The guide uses a small, consistent visual language, so you can navigate it by shape.

BONUS

New material

Depth the live session had no time for — reasoning, calibration, and what a technique looks like when it is working.

WATCH OUT

Failure modes

The specific ways each technique goes wrong. Usually more useful than the technique itself.

IN PRACTICE

Sample language

An illustration of the shape of a move. Never a script to memorise — use your own words.

KEY IDEA

The one line

The single idea a section rests on. If you remember nothing else from that section, remember this.

SECTION 01

The 20/80 Rule of Influence

Roughly twenty percent of your capability produces roughly eighty percent of your impact in a conversation. That twenty percent is not your product knowledge and it is not your pitch. It is two things: your vocal foundations — how you actually sound — and your ability to listen in a way the other person can feel.

This is uncomfortable, because the other eighty percent is where almost everyone spends their preparation time. The deck gets rebuilt. The objection responses get memorised. The opening gets rehearsed. Then all of it is delivered in a rushed, flat, upward-tilting voice that tells the listener, before a single word registers, that this person is not quite sure of themselves.

The pitfall, stated plainly

Professionals obsess over **what** to say and neglect **how** they say it. The what is visible, gradeable and easy to prepare. The how feels vague, so it gets skipped — and it is the part the listener is actually responding to.

BONUS — NOT COVERED IN THE LIVE SESSION

Where your twenty percent actually sits — a self-audit

Before you change anything, find out what you currently sound like. Most people have never heard themselves in a working conversation, and the gap between what you think you sound like and what lands is usually large.

Record three minutes of a real call — with consent — or record yourself delivering your standard opening to an empty room. Then score each of these from 1 to 5:

- **Inflection:** do my statements land downward, or do they curl up like questions?
- **Rate:** do I have more than one speed, or one speed the whole way through?
- **Silence:** is there a single pause longer than two seconds anywhere in three minutes?
- **Fillers:** how many “uhm”, “so”, “right”, “basically” per minute?
- **Warmth:** would a stranger describe this voice as engaged or as processing a queue?

Your two lowest scores are your twenty percent. Work only on those for the next month. Trying to fix all five at once produces a voice that sounds managed rather than confident.

SECTION 02

The 7/38/55 Concept, Honestly

You have almost certainly heard the numbers: communication is 7% words, 38% tone of voice, and 55% body language. It is one of the most repeated statistics in sales training, and it is one of the most misused.

The honest version

The claim, as usually stated, does not hold up. It is not true that the words you choose account for only seven percent of what you communicate — if that were so, you could hold a meeting in a language nobody present spoke and still get 93% of the message across. Obviously not.

But the underlying point survives, and it matters. Tone and body language have a serious, measurable effect on how you are received. Being deliberate about them will change your presence more than any additional piece of product knowledge. Ignoring them because the famous ratio is flawed is throwing out something useful because its label is wrong.

BONUS — NOT COVERED IN THE LIVE SESSION

Where the numbers came from

The figures trace back to research by Albert Mehrabian in the 1960s. The studies were narrow by design: participants judged the *feeling* behind single spoken words — whether a speaker seemed to like them or not — in situations where the word and the delivery **deliberately conflicted**.

So the real finding is much more specific, and much more useful: **when your words and your delivery disagree, people believe your delivery**. It was never a claim about the whole of human communication. Mehrabian himself has said the numbers are widely over-applied.

What to do with it instead

Stop thinking in percentages and start thinking in **congruence** — whether your words, your tone and your body are all telling the same story. Incongruence is what people detect, usually without being able to name it. They walk away saying something felt off.

- “I’m really excited about this” delivered flat and fast reads as: *I am not excited about this*.
- “Take all the time you need” delivered while glancing at the clock reads as: *hurry up*.
- “That’s a great question” delivered as a reflex reads as: *I am buying time*.

The fix is never to perform harder. It is to make the sentiment true before you say it, or not to say it. Congruence is easier to achieve than acting.

WATCH OUT**Do not quote the ratio as fact**

Repeating “communication is 93% non-verbal” in front of an informed buyer is an easy credibility loss — it signals that you take training claims at face value. If the topic comes up, the stronger position is the accurate one: the specific study was about conflicting signals, and the practical lesson is that delivery wins when it contradicts the words. Being the person in the room who knows the difference is worth more than the soundbite.

SECTION 03

The Five Elements of Vocal Foundation

These are the five levers you can consciously move. They are what shift a delivery from transactional — information being transferred — to transformational, where the other person actually changes how they are thinking. Work them one at a time.

1

Emotional Expression & Facial Alignment

Smile while you speak, including on the phone where nobody can see you. This is not a motivational instruction. The position of your facial muscles physically changes the shape of your vocal tract, and that changes the warmth and resonance of the sound that comes out. A smile is audible.

If you cannot summon the feeling, borrow the face. Put any emotion from *Inside Out* on your face — joy, curiosity, even mild alarm — and your voice will follow it. Fake it until the physiology catches up, because it does.

Drill: record the same two sentences twice, once with a neutral face and once smiling. Play both back. You will hear it immediately, and after that you cannot un-hear it.

BONUS — NOT COVERED IN THE LIVE SESSION

Two additions for expression

Put a mirror where you take calls. Not for vanity — for feedback. You cannot correct a face you cannot see, and the default working face for most people is flat concentration, which reads as displeasure.

On video, raise the camera to eye level. A laptop on a desk points up at you, which shortens your neck, drops your chin and makes you look closed off. Books under the laptop cost nothing and change how you are read before you speak. The eyebrow flash — a brief raise on greeting — is a near-universal signal of recognition and openness, and it disappears entirely when the camera angle is wrong.

2

Volume

Volume determines how much space you take up. Speak too quietly in a group and you are, in the most literal sense, easy to talk over.

With three to six people in a room — and the same applies to video calls and recordings — you need to be **above** your natural conversational volume. Roughly twenty to forty percent above. It will feel loud to you and it will sound normal to everyone else, because you hear your own voice through your skull as well as your ears.

Then use the drop. Lowering your volume slightly on a key line forces people to lean in. It creates an intimate, high-focus moment — and it works precisely because you have established a louder baseline to drop from.

3

Pitch

The most common failure is the **inflection trap**: your pitch rises at the end of a statement, turning it into a question. “This usually saves teams about ten hours a week?” You have just told the listener you are not sure, and invited them to doubt it too. It reads as uncertain, or worse, as needy.

Statements land flat or trending downward. That is what certainty sounds like. But do not lock into one register — a monotone is authoritative for about forty seconds and then becomes exhausting. Vary it, play with it, and know which way each sentence is going to land before you start it.

BONUS — NOT COVERED IN THE LIVE SESSION**The three landings — assign them deliberately**

Every sentence you speak ends in one of three ways. Most people use whichever one their nerves supply. Choose instead.

- **Upward.** Signals a question, an invitation, or openness to correction. Deploy it on purpose — it is exactly what you want when you are mirroring or offering a label you are not certain about.
- **Flat.** Neutral information. Facts, logistics, context. Nothing at stake.
- **Downward.** Certainty and decision. Use it on your recommendation, your price, and your close. If your price goes up at the end, you have negotiated against yourself before they have said a word.

Take your three most important sentences and mark the intended landing next to each. That is a five-minute exercise that outperforms an hour of pitch practice.

4

Rate of Speech

Fast talking reads as energetic and engaging, which is why it dominates short-form social media. A slower pace gives people room to actually understand and absorb. Neither is correct on its own — and if you hold either one for too long, the listener's brain begins filtering you out. Sameness is what causes tune-out, not speed.

So vary it, and vary it with intent. **Slow down on what matters** — the insight, the number, the recommendation. **Speed up on the connective tissue** — background, logistics, context they already have. Your rate becomes a highlighter, telling the listener where to put their attention.

BONUS — NOT COVERED IN THE LIVE SESSION**The speed bump**

Pick the single sentence you most want remembered from a conversation. Deliver it about thirty percent slower than everything around it, with a pause on either side. The change in rate does the emphasis for you — no volume increase, no verbal underlining like “this is really important”, which tends to have the opposite effect.

For calibration: comfortable conversational English sits around 140–160 words per minute. Under pressure most people drift to 180 or above without noticing. If you find yourself there, you are not being engaging — you are being anxious out loud.

5

The Intentional Pause

"Silence is where the prospect does the thinking, and where you do the strategising."

Use a pause of **up to** two to three seconds after a major point, so it has somewhere to land. This is a ceiling, not a habit to repeat on every sentence — pausing three full seconds every time you want to make a point will start to feel stagey and slow the conversation down rather than sharpen it. Read the moment and use judgement.

A well-placed pause does three things at once:

- **Lets the speaker think.** It gives your own brain a beat to plan the next move instead of talking your way into a corner.
- **Helps eliminate filler words.** The pause becomes the placeholder — filler words are almost always a pause you were too uncomfortable to take.
- **Lets the listener comprehend.** They need a moment to actually absorb what you just said before you move on to the next point.

For anyone in sales: a well-placed pause also tends to move a conversation toward a close — that mechanic gets its own treatment in a future lesson on how to use the pause across the sales cycle.

WATCH OUT

Silence feels much longer to the person holding it

A three-second pause feels like eight or nine seconds to you and barely registers to the listener. This asymmetry is why almost everyone collapses their pauses — and then fills the gap with a discount, a caveat, or a nervous restatement that undoes the point they just made.

Count it internally rather than trusting your feel for it, and let the length match the moment — a beat before a key idea, up to three seconds after a major one. The most valuable sentence in most conversations is the one the other person says because you did not fill the silence.

SECTION 04

Drills: Building the Voice

Vocal foundations do not improve through understanding. They improve through repetition in low-stakes settings, so that the new behaviour is available to you when the stakes go up. Three to start with — enough to build the habit of deliberate practice.

DRILL 01

The Siren

Take your pitch, an email, or literally any page of a book, and read it out loud starting at a low pitch. Glide smoothly up to a high pitch, then back down. It will sound like a police siren, and it should. The point is range. Most people speak inside a narrow band of about three or four notes and have no idea there is more available. This drill makes the wider range feel physically normal, so that varying your pitch in a real conversation stops feeling theatrical. Two minutes a day for two weeks is enough to notice a change.

DRILL 02

The Movie Audit

Next time you watch a film, pay attention to how the lead characters use vocal foundations. Where did the pause do the work? Where did dropping volume pull you in? Where did a rising inflection make a character sound weak — and was that intentional? What would you have done differently? This is the same logic as the 7/38/55 discussion: the framework does not need to be perfect for the attention to be valuable. Noticing delivery deliberately, even imprecisely, is enormously better than never noticing it at all.

DRILL 03

The Voicemail Lab

Call your own number and leave yourself a thirty-second message pitching something. Listen back the next day, when you have forgotten what you intended. This is the cheapest honest feedback available anywhere, and the delay is what makes it honest.

A workable weekly rhythm

Run these three consistently and it is enough to change a default. Here is one way to build them into a month without adding meaningful time to your week.

WHEN	WHAT	TIME
Every morning	Siren drill, then read one paragraph out loud at deliberate pace	3 min
Once a week	Voicemail Lab, listened back the following day	5 min
Once a week	Movie Audit — notice one thing you would have done differently	10 min
Once a month	Full self-audit from Section 01 — score all five, compare	15 min

Under twenty minutes a week. The monthly re-score is the part people skip and the part that tells you whether any of it is working.

SECTION 05

The Frame: Collaborative Mindset

A frame is the unspoken answer to the question *what is happening here?* Both people have one running at all times, and it shapes how every sentence is interpreted long before technique enters the picture.

The shift

The default frame in most commercial conversations is adversarial and transactional: *me trying to get your money*. Under that frame, every question you ask is a probe, every piece of interest you show is a tactic, and every silence is pressure. The prospect is not being difficult when they respond guardedly — they are responding correctly to the frame you set.

The alternative is to establish, and keep establishing, a different one: **you and me versus the situation**. Same side of the table, both looking at their problem. That is not a mindset exercise for your own benefit — it changes what your questions sound like from the other chair.

The physical version

The frame has a literal form. Sitting across a desk is opposition; sitting adjacent, both looking at the same screen or the same sheet of paper, is collaboration. On a video call, sharing your screen and annotating *their* numbers rather than presenting yours does the same work. Small, and people feel it.

SECTION 06

Mirroring

The smallest move in this guide, and the one with the highest return per unit of effort. It requires no preparation, no cleverness, and almost no words of your own.

The mechanics

Repeat back the last one to five critical words the other person just said. Then pause. Deliver the repeat with an inquisitive, upward pitch — this is the one place where the upward inflection from Section 03 is exactly what you want.

Why it works

A mirror triggers a basic response in the listener that amounts to: *this person is listening to me, therefore I am safe*. That safety is what unlocks elaboration. The person expands on their own thought — usually toward the thing they had not planned to say — without you asking a single prying question. You get the real information and you did not have to interrogate anyone to get it.

IN PRACTICE

Prospect: “We just can’t pull the trigger right now because our current provider has us locked into a Facebook ads contract.”

You: “... Facebook ads contract?”

(Upward pitch. Then a full three-second pause. Say nothing else.)

Prospect: “Yeah — they require sixty days’ notice, and if we cancel early there’s a hefty fee...”

And there is the actual obstacle, which was never “we can’t pull the trigger.” It is a notice period and an exit fee — both of which are things you can work with.

WATCH OUT

Four ways mirroring goes wrong

- **Parroting whole sentences.** Repeating twelve words back sounds like mockery, not attention. One to five words. Never a full sentence.
- **Mirroring too often.** Three mirrors in a row and the person notices the pattern. Once every few exchanges, when something genuinely warrants opening up, is plenty.
- **Flat or downward pitch.** “Facebook ads contract.” delivered downward is a challenge — it sounds like you are disputing them. Upward is curiosity. The entire effect lives in the pitch.
- **Filling the pause.** The mirror does nothing without the silence after it. If you mirror and then immediately ask a follow-up question, you have answered your own move and taken back the floor they were about to use.

SECTION 07

Labeling

If mirroring is the pry bar, labeling is the duct tape — it holds a conversation together when emotion is running through it.

The mechanics

Name or validate the other person's emotional reality or the dynamic they are sitting in. You are not agreeing with them, solving anything, or offering sympathy. You are demonstrating that you have accurately understood what it is like to be them right now.

The golden rule

Never begin a label with **"I think"**, **"I see"** or **"I hear"**. The moment **"I"** enters the sentence, the conversation recentres on you and your perception. Keep it entirely on them.

Use one of three lead-ins, every time:

- **"It sounds like ..."**
- **"It feels like ..."**
- **"It seems like ..."**

IN PRACTICE

Prospect: "I've tried three other training programmes before and none of them stuck with my team past a few weeks."

You: "It sounds like you've been burned by past investments and you want to be absolutely sure you're not wasting resources again."

Prospect: "Exactly. That's exactly it."

"Exactly" is the signal you are looking for. You have just earned a large amount of trust without making a single claim about yourself or your product.

Two directions, one tool

In a stressful moment, a label **defuses** — naming a negative emotion reliably reduces its intensity. In a positive moment, a label **amplifies** — naming someone's enthusiasm makes it more real to them. Same move, opposite direction, chosen by the situation.

And if you are not sure what they are feeling, label it anyway with your pitch moving upward. Being wrong is not a problem. People will correct you — and the correction is more precise information than anything they would have volunteered.

WATCH OUT

Never follow a label with “but”

“It sounds like you’ve been burned before, **but** our programme is different” deletes the label entirely. Everything before “but” is heard as throat-clearing on the way to the pitch, and you have converted a trust move into an obvious tactic — which is worse than not having made it.

After a label: stop. Let it sit. If you must continue, “and” is the conjunction that keeps you on the same side of the table.

A NOTE FROM KRIS

When you practise mirroring and labeling — start with low-stakes situations, not straight into ten-million-dollar deals. Start with the barista at Starbucks. Start with friends over a drink, or the person delivering your food. Once you have done it seventy or eighty times and it feels natural, bring it into a business setting.

Section 09 turns this into a specific plan.

SECTION 08

Influence vs. Manipulation

Every technique in this guide works on people who do not know it is being used. That is precisely why the filter matters. Run your conversations through one baseline test.

THE ETHICAL COMPASS FILTER

Can you openly tell this person, afterwards, **exactly what technique you used** and **why you chose to use it with them?**

IF THE ANSWER IS YES

INFLUENCE

Builds trust

They feel genuinely helped, understood, and glad you guided them through their hesitation.

IF THE ANSWER IS NO

MANIPULATION

Destroys trust

They feel tricked, trapped or deceived, because your intent was hidden and served only you.

The test is transparency, not intention. Almost nobody believes their own intentions are bad. What separates the two columns is whether the move survives being explained — and that is a question you can actually answer honestly.

BONUS — NOT COVERED IN THE LIVE SESSION

Two more filters worth carrying

The reversibility test. Would you still make this move if it cost you the deal? If a technique only appears when you need a yes, it is not a communication skill, it is a pressure tool. Mirroring someone who is telling you they are not a fit — and letting that conclusion stand — is the version that builds a reputation.

The ninety-day test. Will this person be glad about this decision in three months? Not satisfied at signature — glad later, when the pressure of the conversation is long gone and only the consequences remain. This is the one that catches the technically-honest sale that should not have happened.

BONUS — NOT COVERED IN THE LIVE SESSION

If someone calls you out

Occasionally somebody will notice. “You’re doing that thing where you repeat my words back to me.” The instinct is to deny it. Do not.

Answer plainly: yes, that is a listening technique, you use it because it stops you assuming you have understood someone when you have not, and you would rather be accurate than fast. Then carry on. The moment is only awkward if you treat it as exposure — and the fact that you can answer it comfortably is the compass working exactly as designed.

If you ever find yourself unable to give that answer, you are on the wrong side of the line, and no amount of skill will make that a good place to build from.

SECTION 09

The Practice Ladder

Kris's note in Section 07 is the most important instruction in this guide: get seventy to eighty repetitions in low-stakes settings before you bring any of this into a conversation that matters. This section turns that into something you can actually follow.

The reason for the ladder is not caution for its own sake. A new technique performed under pressure comes out stiff — you are concentrating on executing it rather than on the person, and that shows. Reps move it from conscious effort to background behaviour, and only then does it look like listening rather than technique.

STEP	WHERE	WHAT TO PRACTISE	REPS
1	Baristas, drivers, delivery, shop staff	One mirror per interaction. Nothing else. No stakes, no history, no consequence.	20
2	Friends and family, over a drink	Mirror plus one label. They will not notice — and if they do, you can tell them what you are doing.	20
3	Colleagues, internal meetings	Mirror and label combined, once per meeting, on a real point someone raises. Low risk, real professional context.	20
4	Low-value or exploratory calls	Mirror and label with a real counterpart. Debrief yourself afterwards: what surfaced that would not have otherwise?	15
5	Conversations that matter	Now it is available to you under pressure, because it is no longer something you have to remember to do.	—

WATCH OUT**Do not skip steps one and two**

Steps one and two are the ones everybody wants to bypass, because talking to a barista feels beneath the skill you are trying to build. They are also where the awkwardness gets used up. Every rep you skip there is a rep you will take in front of someone whose opinion you care about.

SECTION 10

The 2026 Roadmap

Everything in this guide sits inside a larger sequence. Each month of the Essential Nova Labs core curriculum is engineered to build on the one before it, turning foundational communication into consistent revenue generation rather than isolated tactics.

MONTH	FOCUS	WHAT IT COVERS
July	Communication & Storytelling	Vocal foundations, human connection and high-impact stories. The course this guide accompanies sits inside the community, alongside the nine-module Sell With Story course.
August	Discovery & Rapport	Deeper trust mechanics, advanced questioning, and uncovering the prospect's true pain points.
September	Closing & Objection Handling	Turning friction into agreement, frameworks for handling resistance, and firming up commitments.
October	Prospecting & Follow-ups	Outbound systems, cold outbound strategy and structured multi-channel follow-up. The official hard launch of the platform is 18 October, after which founding member status is no longer available to new members.
December	Mindset & Motivation	Rewiring the psychological barriers to rejection, managing energy, and setting strategic metrics for the year ahead.

Where this guide fits

Delivery and listening come first for a reason. Discovery questions asked in an anxious voice do not get honest answers. Objection handling frameworks delivered with an upward inflection sound like pleading. Prospecting at volume with no vocal range is just noise at scale. Every month that follows depends on this one.

If you take one thing from this document into the rest of the year, make it the pause. It costs nothing, requires no script, and it is the single behaviour that most reliably changes what people are willing to tell you.

Which is the honest limitation of a guide like this one. You can read it in forty minutes and be no better at any of it. What changes the outcome is running the reps, having them reviewed, and hearing how other people got it wrong before you do. That is what the next page is about.

THE NEXT STEP

You now know the moves. Reps are what turn them into skill.

Vocal foundations, mirroring and labeling are not read-once ideas. They are practised, reviewed and corrected — which is far easier with people doing the same work beside you.

FOUNDING MEMBER — SOFT LAUNCH, OPEN UNTIL 18 OCTOBER

- \$127 for 3 months — the soft-launch rate, locked in for life
- First 100 members: lifetime price protection, it never increases for you
- First 100 members also get a 1-on-1 session to audit your sales process
- July inside the community: Communication & Storytelling, plus the 9-module Sell With Story course
- August onward: Discovery, Objection Handling, Prospecting, Mindset

After 18 October the platform moves to its full public launch, and founding member status is no longer available to new members.

See what is inside and lock the founding rate:

<https://www.enl.pro/about>

Bring one real conversation from this week. That is where the learning starts.

***Communication is a skill.
And skills are built with people.***