

Voice Acting 101

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"If you trust in yourself. . .and believe in your dreams. . .and follow your star. . . you'll still get beaten by people who spent their time working hard and learning things and weren't so lazy."

-Miss Tick, Terry Pratchett

INTRODUCTION

Welcome! This course will cover some of the basics steps for improving your voice acting ability, whether you wish to voice act professionally, or as a hobby (volunteering for one of the Elder Scrolls mod projects, perhaps?). However it is applicable to any character based acting.

This course is primarily **performance based**. It will not cover how to use recording software, what equipment is recommended, or how to edit your recordings.

If you need more information on these topics, please see the pinned posts in the acting channel of the AU as there are many great in-depth guides available there.

This course is designed to be very short, simple and to the point, without too much reading. It will guide you with practical, applicable tips for getting started, as well as easy exercises you can do to practice. Note that this is a very basic, foundational course, and as such won't go into great depth. This is not an exhaustive course but should help you build a solid starting point which you can then expand on with further education and training.



Getting Started

To participate in this course you will need:

- **A microphone** to record with. If you don't have a dedicated microphone, a phone mic will usually be better than a laptop one.
- **A quiet space** to record in. The space doesn't need to be sound treated, but somewhere that doesn't have lots of natural echo, where you can record alone without disturbing (or being disturbed by) others. Something like a bedroom or office is fine.
- **A basic knowledge of how to start and stop recording on the software you choose to use**, and how to save that recording as an MP3 or WAV file to send it on Discord should you wish to get feedback.
- **A glass of water** is recommended, as keeping your mouth hydrated will reduce any mouth clicks and improve your sound quality.



Lesson Plan

1. [Getting set up](#) - quick start guide to a decent sound
2. [Understanding a character](#) - first steps to a convincing performance
3. [All about emotions](#) - bringing characters to life
4. [Adding emphasis](#) - how stress conveys meaning
5. [Stop pretending, start acting](#) - Achieving realism through honesty
6. [Emotional variance](#) - the key to making your performance memorable
7. [Vocal transformation](#) - changing your sound with accent and colour
8. [Next steps](#) - where do you go from here?

Remember to take breaks and drink some water.

One lesson per day or per week is recommended, however, it's up to you to choose your pacing.

Make sure you feel confident before moving onto the next lesson.

Lesson 1 - Getting set up

Quick start guide to a decent sound

Goal: To establish a basic recording set up to optimize your sound quality in your given space so you can start recording. This is essential in order for Teachers to be able to give you feedback - and for your own self assessment. The sound doesn't need to be professional level, it just needs to be clear.

Let's get started!

- Get set up in a quiet space away from people. Ideally, this should be a smaller space free from background noise which has minimal hard, reflective surfaces - these create echo. A small room with lots of soft furnishings is ideal. A bathroom is a terrible recording space - a closet full of clothes is a great recording space. A good test to check if a space is good or not is to clap, and listen for an echo, in different rooms. This will help train your ear to hear reverb, as well as help you pick a good recording spot.
 - **Optional:** If you'd like to work towards a more professional sound quality, you can create a blanket fort to record in - soft pillows and blankets will really help to dampen reverb. If you'd like a more serious solution, there are plenty of options for different budgets that you can find by googling "Diy Vocal Booth"
- Once your space is set up and you are comfortable in it, it's time to warm up! Here's a great 5 minute vocal warm up for actors that helps with breath, facial muscles, and articulation: <https://youtu.be/y7EEMS9VPY8>
- Now your space is set up and your voice is ready to go, it's time to test your equipment. Using your chosen mic and chosen software, you want to start recording. Your mouth should be about 6 inches/15cm away from the microphone. Press the record button, and record a simple sentence, before stopping the recording and listening back. I typically use the sentence: "This is a microphone test, testing that everything sounds good." It doesn't have to be complex!
- So, how do you sound so far? If you notice that the recording sounds particularly loud and distorted, you are likely **clipping**, which means the mic is picking up more volume than it can handle. Try recording further away from the mic, or turning the gain down if you are using a mic/interface with a gain knob. If you are too quiet, get a bit closer or turn the gain up.
- If you are sounding particularly muffled, test with your mouth at different angles to the mic, and make sure you are recording into the correct side of the mic. Also check that you aren't covering the mic in some way, such as with a sheet, or your hand (if you're recording on a phone).

- If your recording sounds particularly wet or clicky, your mouth may be dry. Drink some water!
- Try to eliminate any background noise such as fans, TV, or AC, where possible.
- Blow your nose if your nose is blocked up - congestion heavily affects your voice!
- Now that you have a recording space, keep playing around with these settings and listening back to your test sentence each time, until you have a set-up that sounds good to you. There is only so much you can do to improve sound quality before upgrading your equipment, but the goal for today is just to find something that works for the tools you have, to get the best sound possible. Remember your set-up for next time, so it'll be much quicker to jump in and start recording.
- **TIP:** At the start of every recording session, it's a good idea to go to your designated recording spot, set yourself up with some water and some warmups, and do a test recording and listen back before each recording session. You never know when something can randomly go wrong, and catching it in the beginning is much better than catching it an hour into a recording session and needing to start-over!

Task: Follow the steps provided above, and record the following script. For this session, *you're playing a character that sounds like you* - don't put on an accent or tone, just use your natural voice. The goal is to produce a clean and clear recording. You are encouraged to perform this script in the way that comes naturally to you. Read it a few times first, and feel free to record it multiple times until you have a take that you like.

"How am I? Huh. That's a good question, actually. Haven't had much time to even consider that of late, between the kids, running the shop, I mean - anyway. There is one thing... *sigh* I'm having trouble sleeping. I heard there's a new alchemist in town - Alaro, Alaric, something like that. Apparently he likes to hang around at the inn most nights. AND most days, if you believe the rumours. *scoff* If you ever run into him when he hasn't been on the Balmora Blue all day, ask him to whip something up for me, alright? I'll make it worth his while - and yours, too, of course."

It is recommended you save your recordings to look back on later as you learn.

Most voice actors are expected to be able to analyse and assess their own performances - you will often be required to be your own director, both in voluntary projects and paid ones.

Being able to self critique and knowing the difference between a good take and a take that can be improved is vital.

Lesson 2 - Understanding a character

First steps to a convincing performance

Goal: To learn how to embody a character, rather than just reading a script. The difference between acting and reading is the most critical step in becoming a convincing actor, and it starts with understanding the character you're playing.

Let's get started!

- Get set up in your recording spot and do a test recording to make sure everything is still working well. Once you're ready, let's start by looking at the script we used last lesson:

"How am I? Huh. That's a good question, actually. Haven't had much time to even consider that of late, between the kids, running the shop, I mean - anyway. There is one thing... *sigh* I'm having trouble sleeping. I heard there's a new alchemist in town - Alaro, Alaric, something like that. Apparently he likes to hang around at the inn most nights. AND most days, if you believe the rumours. *scoff* If you ever run into him when he hasn't been on the Balmora Blue all day, ask him to whip something up for me, alright? I'll make it worth his while - and yours, too, of course."

- Now - usually you will be given additional context than just a script for a character. However, let's start by figuring out what we can by using context clues. This is a vital skill because different directors/clients will give you varying amounts of info - some may give you a whole backstory, others will just give you a name and an age.
- Read over the script and make a list of things you know about this character. I'll go over some of those points in the next step, but try to think of as many as you can yourself first.
- So, from reading the script we can see that this character is likely a young adult or middle-aged - they have children who they still actively look after as well as a job. They are family oriented and seem to be hard working (or quite busy, at the very least). They are likely stressed, and tired (they haven't had much time to consider how they are doing between all their responsibilities, and aren't sleeping well). There are certainly more clues you can use to build up this character in your head - but that's a good base on which you can start crafting this person's voice.
- Based on this list of traits we've established, how will this impact the voice? They're a busy, stressed, tired adult with a lot of responsibilities who doesn't spend much time taking care of themselves. These things should be reflected in the voice. They might speak quite fast at times due to always being busy and not having much time. They might speak quite *slowly* due to being exhausted and overworked. They may have a slightly deeper vocal pitch due to being slightly older. They might trip over their words or stutter a

bit due to being in a rush to get back to work. They might hesitate a lot due to their mind being elsewhere, focussed on their responsibilities. They might sigh a lot, or even yawn.

- Next, let's try to analyse how this character is *feeling*. There can be some overlaps here - the character may both be stressed in general, or tired in general, as part of their character traits based on lifestyle etc, while also experiencing more temporary emotions/feelings of tiredness or stress in the moment. However, there may also be other emotions present. For example: "Huh. That's a good question actually" - is this thoughtful/pensive? Is it even sarcasm perhaps? "AND most days, if you believe the rumours. *scoff*" - here the character is clearly feeling something negative. They sound like they are judging the Alchemist here for his drinking. This could be jealousy, criticism, moral contempt, or even just lightlighted gossip.
- How you decide to interpret this character and their speech is completely up to you - there is no right or wrong way to bring this character to life. The important thing is that whichever traits and emotions you choose to focus on, they shine through during your recording. These elements of emotion, character, and personality are a big part of separating reading from acting. Here are a few examples of the difference between reading a script, and acting out a script:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/124fh8ToWqrV7vKJJlrgOZ_rZ5Ru1Cfp/view?usp=sharing

Task: Follow the steps provided above, and record the following script, with an emphasis on highlighting character traits and emotions through your voice:

"How am I? Huh. That's a good question, actually. Haven't had much time to even consider that of late, between the kids, running the shop, I mean - anyway. There is one thing... *sigh* I'm having trouble sleeping. I heard there's a new alchemist in town - Alaro, Alaric, something like that. Apparently he likes to hang around at the inn most nights. AND most days, if you believe the rumours. *scoff* If you ever run into him when he hasn't been on the Balmora Blue all day, ask him to whip something up for me, alright? I'll make it worth his while - and yours, too, of course."

Practice is the key to success. I know you know that, but this is a reminder to incorporate voice acting practice into your day to day life.

Read any materials you have around you, and read them out loud.

Read the instructions on a shampoo bottle and give the guy some personality.

You will only improve by doing.

Lesson 3 - All about emotions

Bringing characters to life

Goal: To understand how to convey emotions through voice. While it's great to simply say "just remember a time you were sad, and channel that to sound sad" - it can be helpful to deconstruct what this actually means to have a better control over your performance. Acting isn't something that comes naturally to everyone, but it's something everyone can learn to do well with practice.

Let's get started!

- Get set up in your recording spot and do a test recording to make sure everything is still working well. Once you're ready, let's start by looking at today's script:

Is it true? No way! I can't believe it... When did you find out? And you're only just telling me now? We need to leave right away!

- This is a very short script - there aren't any particular character clues - and without being told, there aren't really too many emotional ones either outside of perhaps surprise or shock! That's intentional though, because this script can make sense with a wide range of emotions. Today we're going to be working on how to convey a wide range of different emotions with voice alone - since in voice acting, you can't rely on body language or facial expression to help you.
- We're going to try recording this script in the following ways: **happy, sad, scared, angry**. These are very basic emotions, but generally act as a good base for more complex emotions (excitement, jealousy, suspicion, regret, etc). Take some time to consider how YOU sound when you're experiencing (and expressing) these emotions.
- Let's start with **HAPPY**. While everyone expresses feelings differently, happy speech is often characterised by talking a little faster, with more energy, in a slightly higher pitch, with a large variety of inflection changes. This can sound bouncy or "bubbly", by the pitch going up and down on different words, and putting more emphasis on more words than would usually occur. For example, instead of: "Wow, I **really** liked that cake, it was **delicious**", the stresses might sound like "**Wow**, I **really** **liked** that **cake**, it was **delicious**". Words may also be more drawn out - "woooow!", "it was deliiiiicioous".
- Next, let's look at **SAD**. How does someone sound sad? Sadness is often vocalised by slower speech, with much less energy, emphasis, and inflection (depending on the level of sadness - someone who is very distraught and sobbing can still place a lot of emphasis on words). Sadness is usually a little flatter/more monotonous, and the voice can be shaky when trying not to cry, sometimes with voice breaks, sighs, sniffles, and some breathlessness.

- Next up - **SCARED**. Interestingly, sounding scared shares similarities with both SAD and HAPPY. Being scared is often quiet, shaky, and breathless - but also there may be a lot of inflection, energy, and emphasis as terror or panic builds. Unlike sadness, this is often much more fast paced, and there may be an underlay of rapid breathing throughout.
- Finally - **ANGRY**. Anger is most easily recognised by a louder volume - passion and intensity causes the volume and pace to rise, and there is a lot of emphasis on words as they are spat or shouted. However, the inflection is often quite stable rather than “bouncy”, staying at one single elevated level. Words are more likely to be growled or snarled, and words are more likely to be short, snappy, and curt rather than drawn out.
- So far we’ve focussed on how these different emotions can sound, and how to emulate that with your voice. Often though, you will be able to get a much better performance when you add physicality - using your body to enhance these feelings. Take a moment to think about what your body does differently in these different emotional states. Here’s a great example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsYKjOuPWPI>
- When you’re happy, you might talk with your hands more, make big, energetic gestures, bounce on your feet, or have a big smile. When you’re sad, you might be frowning a bit, looking down, shoulders hunched, hands fiddling with something or clutching your chest. When you’re scared you might make yourself smaller, shrink down, hug your body, shake, have wide eyes that dart around. When angry, you might clench your jaw, grit your teeth, clench your fists, stare at something with a determined frown. You don’t have to incorporate all of these elements at all - rather, find which ones help you access the emotions you’re conveying. Things like a smile, or gritted teeth, do come through in your voice when recording, so can really help a lot when conveying those relevant feelings.
- It’s important to note that emotions can be expressed in a huge variety of different ways. Happiness can be quiet and held back, sadness can be loud and volatile, terror can be bouncy and energetic, anger can be quiet and breathless - these examples are just starting points to help you recognise and verbalise how different emotions can sound, beyond just “sound happy” or “sound sad”. Recognising the patterns and changes you make to your speech can help you to make sharp, accurate decisions when expressing feelings, rather than just guessing. It can also help you to differentiate between emotions distinctly in your performance, which is key to taking the listener through an emotional journey that helps them connect with your character.

Task: Follow the steps provided above, and record the following script in the 4 different emotional styles discussed: Happy, Sad, Scared, and Angry. You may also want to try both with, and without, adding physicality to the lines, to really hear the difference when you add your body to the performance.

Is it true? No way! I can't believe it... When did you find out? And you're only just telling me now? We need to leave right away!

Start paying attention to your own mannerisms when you feel certain things throughout the day. Start paying attention to others', too.

Knowing how different people express emotions in different ways is a great tool to not only perform a character realistically, but being able to perform a range of characters in a unique way.

Acting is a reflection of true human behaviour and emotion, heavily related to the Theory of Mind. For further reading on the topic:

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/theory-of-mind.html>

Lesson 4 - Adding emphasis

How stress conveys meaning

Goal: To learn how to use emphasis to add to your performance and break out of reading habits

Let's get started!

- From today's lesson onwards, we're going to dive into some slightly more advanced concepts. You may want to spend some extra time chewing over the different techniques discussed. As with any learning endeavor, repetition, practice, and going over the material can help to really absorb the information. I've had the best results with students who take some information, then go away stewing on it for a week, before coming back a week later with a new performance really taking on the feedback and direction, compared to students who try to blast through everything and send me multiple takes within the span of an hour. It's ok - and preferable - to take your time.
- When it comes to voice acting, we have to use all the tools at our disposal to convey feelings, since the audience cannot see us. One very important but often undervalued tool is emphasis - and this is where people most often make mistakes when starting out. When we read a book aloud, we have a tendency to emphasise for **rhythm**. But when we actually *communicate* with people, we add emphasis to convey meaning and/or emotion.
- This is a famous exercise, this iteration being summarised by the talented LacunaFish of Skywind. Read the following sentence aloud, stressing a different word each time:

"She didn't steal my money"

This phrase means something completely different depending on which word you put the emphasis:

she - someone else stole the money

didn't - refutation of the idea that she had stolen the money

steal - she did something else with the money, but she didn't steal it

my - she stole someone else's money

money - she did not steal money, but something else

- This is also true for conveying emotions, rather than direct meaning. For example, take a look at the following script:

"I have long believed it was a mistake to turn from the old gods."

This is taken from an audition line I've worked on with dozens of voice actors. Many people stress the word "turn" in the first sentence, and the sentence often sounds like this: "I have long believed it was a mistake to turn from the old gods."

This is a natural place to emphasise to convey rhythm when reading aloud - it results in a pretty rhythmic pattern and vocal flow which sounds pleasant - but it doesn't make sense as someone who is acting. There are too many words emphasised, which by itself already dilutes any meaning you might gather from the emphasis, and there is no purpose to the stress outside of rhythm. This would be great in poetry, not so great in having a believable conversation. It doesn't add any meaning or convey any emotion.

- Instead, make sure your stresses are intentional, that they convey a message. This means picking out the keywords that are most important in the sentence - the word that subconsciously, our character most needs the listener to hear to understand them and their intention. For example - stressing "mistake" could show bitterness, stressing "long" could show weariness, stressing "old" signifies the contrast between his feelings about the new gods and the old - in other words, turning from the new gods (or not worshipping them from the start) is not part of the issue at hand.

Task: Record the following script, changing the emphasised word each time to change the *meaning* of sentence:

"I didn't kill her!"

Now take a look at this script:

"I wasn't home when it happened. I didn't know they were coming. No one did. If I could go back and change the past... Well. Thinking about it is pointless now, isn't it?!"

Take a moment to think about where you think emphasis would make sense in this script. What words convey meaning when emphasised? Feel free to record it a few times, testing out different stress placements.

How does the feeling of the sentence change when these words are emphasised:

"I wasn't **home** when it happened. I **didn't know** they were coming. No one did. If I could go back and change the past... Well. Thinking about it is **pointless** now, isn't it?!"

And how does the feeling of the sentence change when these words are emphasised:

"I wasn't home when **it** happened. I didn't know **they** were coming. No one did. If I could go back and change the past... Well. **Thinking** about it is pointless now, isn't it?!"

Friendly reminder to take a break and drink some water.

Helpful quote:

“When we read a book aloud, we have a tendency to emphasise for rhythm. But when we actually communicate with people, we add emphasis to convey meaning and/or emotion.”

Lesson 5 - Stop pretending, start acting

Achieving realism through honesty

Goal: To learn the difference between reading, pretending, and acting, and tips to act more realistically (especially when acting doesn't come naturally to you)

Let's get started!

- Now that we know the basics of how to record, and how to start bringing a character to life in a technical sense, let's look at **what acting actually is**. I've mentioned already that the difference between reading and acting is the key to a great performance - and the most fundamental part of acting is **honesty**. You aren't pretending, or lying, rather you are becoming, and embodying. The ability to really put yourself in that character's shoes and actually experience the emotions they're feeling is at the heart of a believable acting performance - because if you don't believe it, how can anybody else?
- Here is a great video by John Windsor-Cunningham on the subject, including an exercise I recommend trying out: <https://youtu.be/LcmG49--mDM>
- Essentially, the key to being a great actor is learning how to feel the things your character is feeling. This can be done in a variety of ways, such as using memory. To use memory, think back to a time in your life you felt the relevant emotion - such as a time you were really happy, or really scared. Try to remember how that felt, not just from a psychological standpoint, but also a physical one - try to put yourself back in that place.
- Another method is through imagination - trying to imagine how it would feel to be in a character's situation. Close your eyes and imagine how it would feel to have spent your whole life working and training for something all day and all night, to finally be actually achieving that goal, for example.
- Yet another method is through contextualisation of what it is you're saying. When reading a line - before you start, think to yourself, who are you saying it to? Who is that person, to you? Why are you telling them what you're telling them? How does that person make you feel?
For example - you could be passing a secret message to your child. This is the person you are closest to in the world. You could be saying it because you aren't going to be around much longer, and you need to send them on a quest to finish your unfinished business. This is a person who you trust and feel safe around.
Framing and contextualising your script in this way can make it easier to relate to as you can find parallels with real relationships you have in your life currently, and base your emotional responses on your own relationships with people in the present, rather than a memory or imagined scenario.

- So how do you know if you are acting vs pretending? The key, as mentioned, is honesty - genuinely feeling the emotions you're portraying. Not just saying "I feel happy" with a smile on your face, but actually feeling genuine happiness, or sadness, or fear, or spite, or jealousy, or whatever feeling your character is supposed to be feeling. This will make it infinitely easier to perform in a way that is believable. While you can study the techniques behind how to seem happy or sad through your vocalisations, actually feeling these things will bring a performance to life in a way pretence can't match.
- Tip: In Lesson 3 (All About Emotions) we discussed adding physicality/your body to your performance. If you're struggling to feel emotions in your performance, adding physicality is a fantastic way to connect with those feelings as your mind is used to associating certain motions with certain feelings. It's good to think again about how your body, actions, and reflexes change when you're feeling different emotions and use that to your advantage - even though people can't see you, they can help connect you with your emotions.

Task: Follow the steps provided above, and record the following script in the 4 different emotional styles discussed: Happy, Sad, Scared, and Angry. This time though, the key isn't to implement the vocal techniques for sounding like these emotions, but to actually feel them:

Is it true? No way! I can't believe it... When did you find out? And you're only just telling me now? We need to leave right away!

Now try taking the context cues from the following scripts, and take the time to feel what each character is feeling before recording them. You can pick one, or try them all if you prefer.

A conspiracy to kill the emperor? Thank the Divines you found this evidence. Well done. And, it's good to hear you brought justice to those who would consider such a course of action.
- I thank you, and the Emperor himself may personally thank you when he hears of this. You have done a great service to the Empire. Long live Uriel Septim!

He thinks I might be interested in him? Ha! That's a ridiculous notion. The very thought... insane. I mean, has he seen himself in a mirror lately? I'm sure he's a decent enough sort, but that's ridiculous. He might be more suited for my cousin Glathel. She's low-born, plain, and desperate for a husband. But me? You can tell Gadayn that you've spoken to Eraldil, and she's not interested!

I welcome you as the friend of my friend, outlander. But I wish to go to my friend's bookstore, and these troublesome fools are in my way. I have tried to persuade them, but they hate my race, and I fear there will be violence. Perhaps if you speak with them... but be careful... and be ready.

**"Acting is not pretending or lying. It's finding a side of yourself that's
the character and ignoring your other sides"**

- Angeline Jolie

Lesson 6 - Emotional Variance

The key to making your performance memorable

Goal: Take the listener on an engaging emotional journey by varying the emotional performance

Let's get started!

- Hello and welcome to today's lesson! Let's jump right in. When I was creating my first character demo reel, one thing that my director told me that really stuck with me was to take the listener on a journey throughout the script. So what does this mean? It means creating an **emotional story** by varying the emotions you express throughout the script. Let's look at an example:

"Of course I worry about you, child. I worry about all my people. As ruler of this kingdom, my first concern is the safety of my people. If no one leaves, then no one can ever leave me."

- First - what can we take away from this script? It's someone powerful, probably older (from the use of "child"), someone who has been questioned about whether or not they care for this person ("of course I worry about you") - so perhaps someone who has acted or said things to indicate they *don't*. It seems to be someone with a fear of abandonment - they are indicating that no one can leave, because they are afraid of abandonment.
- Based on this initial analysis, it would be easy to record the whole thing using one consistent style - a caring voice with authority, for example. Or a darker interpretation, where the character is snapping the words defensively. While these would both be fair recording styles, and there would be nothing wrong with this, we can take the performance a step further by looking at the intention behind each individual line:
 - "Of course I worry about you, child." Caring, reassuring, kind, gentle, happier
 - "I worry about all my people." More impersonal - a matter of fact statement, neutral
 - "As ruler of this kingdom, my first concern is the safety of my people." Slipping into something a little colder and more authoritative, a reflection of the burden of responsibility on their shoulders - perhaps even a bit defensive
 - "If no one leaves, then no one can ever leave me." Quiet - vulnerable, perhaps the first thing this character has said that is actually true, rather than an act put on to manipulate, or as a mask put on to uphold their duties. Could even go down a more evil route - quiet and said with something closer to venom or hatred - they could be keeping their subjects in captivity due to this fear of abandonment, which could stem from trauma faced at a young age, for example
- Here is an example of the difference between the 3 tonal examples we've discussed:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/124fh8ToWqrV7vKJJlrgOZ_rZ5Ru1Cfp/view?usp=sharing

- Can you feel the difference in how the performances convey character and feeling? There absolutely is a place for more monotonous reads - for example, cartoon characters who convey a specific feeling (think of a good fairy or an evil monster in a kid's show). Generally, these takes are more appropriate for caricatured characters, and less appropriate for shows or games aiming for realism (most video games tend to actually fall in the more realistic category when it comes to acting direction).
- **TIP:** If you're struggling to differentiate between how different lines sound, feel free to break it down to one core feeling - shy, sad, intimate, angry, vengeful, jealous, happy, in love, curious, etc, and focus on this one feeling. Next - crank it to the MAX. Overact, overemphasise, put everything you have into each line to the point of sounding silly. From there, it's much easier to dial a performance back, than it is to not go far enough and end up sounding flat. Practice overacting, and then recording a line at different intensities - 5 being the most overacted, then 4, then 3, then 2, then 1, with 1 being completely flat and neutral.

TLDR: As a voice actor, you should know what your character is feeling with every line of dialogue they say, and the listener should be able to hear this in your performance. If you don't know what the character is feeling, the listener definitely won't.

Task: Follow the steps provided above, and record the following script, but first think about the intention, feeling, and motivation between each line. Feel free to copy it down and make notes next to each line as we did above in order to practice finding these motivations/feelings hidden in the lines.

"How am I? Huh. That's a good question, actually. Haven't had much time to even consider that of late, between the kids, running the shop, I mean - anyway. There is one thing... *sigh* I'm having trouble sleeping. I heard there's a new alchemist in town - Alaro, Alaric, something like that. Apparently he likes to hang around at the inn most nights. AND most days, if you believe the rumours. *scoff* If you ever run into him when he hasn't been on the Balmora Blue all day, ask him to whip something up for me, alright? I'll make it worth his while - and yours, too, of course."

So! This is the last time we'll be recording this script. Pull up your first recording from lesson 1, as well as your most recent recording from today's lesson. How do they compare?

It takes more than a couple of hours of practice to fully absorb any kind of learning, so don't hesitate to go over these lessons and practice the different techniques laid out. A good way to do this is with extracts from books you love, or even by searching up monologues from a play or movie. I would recommend doing this with material you haven't heard before, so you aren't influenced by another actor's take - or if it is one you've heard before, try to change the context a bit (make an angry script sad, or a happy script angry, for example).

Friendly reminder to take a break and drink some water.

Helpful quote:

“Overact. From there, it’s much easier to dial a performance back, than it is to not go far enough and end up sounding flat.”

Lesson 7 - Vocal Transformation

Changing your sound with accent and colour

Goal: Learn what vocal colour is, and how to change yours. Learn the importance of articulation. Learn how to learn a new accent. Learn how to learn how to learn - wait, nevermind.

Let's get started!

- What is vocal colour? Vocal colour is usually a singing term that describes what makes a singer's voice unique, and the characteristics of voice. I like to use the term to talk about someone's general vocal make-up - things like the pitch, whether a voice is raspy or smooth, whether it's chesty or heady or nasally, whether it's shaky or smokey or powerful or light. People who are good at impressions are usually very good at altering their vocal colour - and this is typically what people think of when they think of voice acting: <https://youtu.be/1CV46e-Nt24?t=51>
- Changing your vocal colour isn't necessarily something you need to be able to do to succeed in voice acting. Some people get by just fine with their natural voice, especially for more commercial work. That said, it's definitely something worth exploring and can help a lot if character based work is something you want to pursue. This course is more focussed on performance, but if you do want to experiment with vocal colour, a great place to start can be to start with attempting different age ranges, and different genders - listen to children, older people, and people of a different gender to you.
- The best tip I can give for this is to really analyse what you hear - write it down, and copy what you hear. You might feel a little silly at first, and it will take a while before it starts to feel natural/comfortable - you're using your vocal cords in a way you don't usually use them, so until they get more stretched and exercised and practiced, it will feel a little weird! One exercise could be following along with the YouTube video I linked above, and picking a few of those styles to practice with.
- One thing I wanted to touch on before the end of the course is the importance of **articulation**. While some characters may require or benefit from more slurred speech, unless there is a direct reason for this (a more mumbly character due to the character having a very shy personality, or a character slurring due to being intoxicated), you should absolutely learn to articulate. Face-to-face, it's easier to understand poor articulation due to lip reading, body language, and context cues - but these things aren't possible when voice acting, so make sure you are carefully pronouncing each letter that should be pronounced. This doesn't mean you should speak in a way that is slow or stilted, you can speak naturally, but don't omit or skip or blur words together, **unless you have a specific reason to do so**. It makes you sound less confident, and usually really distracts from the performance. Your one, main job as a voice actor is to allow other people to hear what you are saying. If they can't hear you, nothing else will matter.

- Now let's talk accents - if you're doing this course, it's incredibly likely you're interested in one of the Elder Scrolls mod projects, which means you might be interested in performing a character whose accent is different to your own. Once you know what accent this is, be it British, French, Nordic, Spanish, or something else entirely - know that you're going to really have to put the work in.
 - Identify the accent you want to learn
 - Identify the main differences between your current accent and the new accent. This should be things like how they pronounce their vowels, their consonants, their Rs. Do your research and make notes!
 - Next, and most importantly, is actually listening to the accent. Now listen to it some more. Listen, and copy, and emulate. Start by learning to copy specific words and phrases, and practice, practice, practice.
 - If possible, get feedback from someone who speaks the language or has the accent you're looking to work on.
 - Seriously - keep practicing. Read a book out loud in that accent every day, annoy your family and friends by only talking in that new accent - you'll get there, and the more you do it, the quicker you'll get it.
- This lesson has been about exploring optional voice acting endeavours and how to get started taking further steps to increasing your range. You may already have great articulation, or have no interest in learning a new accent - that's totally fine, but these analytical skills of listening, practicing, and enunciating will be applicable throughout your voice acting career. For now, feel free to just focus on the parts relevant to you, and you can refer back to this lesson later if you need a hand getting started. When I first started I felt really lost with how *the heck* to change my voice, or learn the all important American accent. I hope this can serve as a starting point so you don't feel so overwhelmed and have some actionable steps to take on your journey.

Task: Give these tongue twisters a go to practice your articulation:

- High roller, low roller, lower roller.
- I need a box of biscuits, a box of mixed biscuits, and a biscuit mixer.
- He thrusts his fists against the posts and still insists he sees the ghosts.
- The jolly collie swallowed a lollipop.
- The sick sister's zither ceaseth; therefore she sufficeth us.
- Friday's Five Fresh Fish Specials.
- Imagine an imaginary menagerie manager imagining managing an imaginary menagerie.
- Twixt this and six thick thistle sticks.
- Red leather, yellow leather.
- She sells seashells by the seashore, and the shells she sells are seashells.
- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers; A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked; If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

What are your voice acting goals?

Do you want to improve your performance ability?

Do you want to learn to transform your voice to bring a range of unique characters to life?

Do you want to master different accents?

Knowing where you want to go or what you want to improve specifically will allow you to create an action plan to take those steps you need to become the voice actor you want to be.

Lesson 8 - Next Steps

Where do we go from here?

Goal: Learn how, when, and where to apply your new set of skills, and how to keep refining them after this course.

Congratulations! You've made it to the end of the course. So, what's next?

- **If you want to learn and practice more:**
 - Check out the pinned posts in the AU Voice Acting Channel. There are additional, far more in depth lessons there. You can also post any recordings there for feedback about your performance!
 - For exploring vocal transformation, learning to adapt your voice for different characters: <https://youtu.be/FVmAEEzr6ao>
 - For general acting lessons, check out the John Windsor Cunningham masterclass playlist on YouTube: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvTdu1-ynLETA7XSJvSWutFwLragyDa>
 - There are then a huge variety of voice acting courses you can take, from extremely talented and successful VAs, such as Nancy Cartwright, Chuck Huber, and many more. These aren't free though, so make sure to do your research before you dive in.
- **If you want to make a career out of voice acting:**
 - Decide whether you want to be purely character based, or also do commercial work. What kind of voice acting do you want to do?
 - You'll want to make a **demo reel** for each sector of voice acting you want to go into - usually, this is commercial, video game, and animation (should you want to do all 3).
 - You can either get these made professionally, in which case you'll work with a script writer, director, and masterer to produce the reel - otherwise you'll want to do these things yourself, writing 6-8 short scripts to fill about 1 minute of time total for the full reel, then record them, edit them, and add things like music and effects. Make sure you use music/effects/scripts that are either your own, or not copyrighted.
 - **Tip:** Go on youtube and search up "commercial demo reel" or "character demo reel" to see how these sound
 - Once you have a reel, you'll also want an (at least semi) professional headshot or portrait photograph to use on sites or to apply for agencies.
 - You can search up "voice over jobs" and either apply to freelance sites, local companies, talent agencies, or even start your own website. With your photo, demo reel, and, well, your voice - you're good to get started!

- **If you want to volunteer for an Elder Scrolls Project:**

If you're not sure what exactly you want to help with, feel free to post in the AU voice acting channel for help. You can also get help with your auditions or samples there before applying to a mod. Otherwise, the links to the big 3 mod projects can be found here:

- <https://beyondskyrim.org/> - to apply to a BS project, click the "join" button on the website and scroll down. There will be a list of projects, such as Cryodil, Morrowind, Black Marsh etc to choose from. These are headed by different teams of volunteers, so you'll need to press the "join" button and fill out the application for each project you are interested in joining. For Beyond Skyrim, you will need a premade demo or sample of your abilities. In this case, making a character demo reel could be an option. Making a demo reel is discussed in the previous section about pursuing a career in voice acting.
- <https://tesrskywind.com/> - to audition for Skywind, you'll need to use the Casting Call Club link:
<https://www.castingcall.club/projects/tesrenewal-skywind>
In this case, you don't need a premade demo, as instead you will be auditioning for a specific race. Scroll down on the site until you find the race you want to audition for, and record the audition lines (don't forget the combat lines!)
- <https://skyblivion.com/> as of the time of writing, VA applications for Skyblivion are closed - but feel free to check if this is still the case by clicking the "volunteer" button on the website.
- If you are interested in another mod, the process will likely be similar to either Beyond Skyrim (a demo reel/sample will be needed) or Skywind (a direct audition), so be prepared to look up the mod and provide the required material to be considered.

Well, that's about it from me.

I hope you found this course helpful and were able to take something away from it.

Remember, practice is key.

Good luck in your acting pursuits.

-Joy