



# Vocal Dynamics

*Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with deeper meaning.*

—Maya Angelou

Voice is the tool by which all activities involving speech are performed, whether during public speaking, acting, business speaking or simple conversation. We use it to inform, persuade and connect with other people. Your voice is the key to delivering your words with intention.



## EXERCISE: Warming up the Voice

**STEP 1:** Begin by focusing on your core breath, inhaling for a count of five and exhaling for a count of five.

**STEP 2:** Repeat the breathing process, this time allowing the sound of a moan to be released during your exhalation, connecting the breath to the voice.

**STEP 3:** Starting at the center of your range, make the “ah” sound and gently cascade from the lowest pitch of your voice to the highest pitch and back to the lowest again, engaging the entire register.

**STEP 4:** Next, warm up the four articulators (lips, jaw, tongue, soft palate) by repeating the following phrases aloud, enunciating for crisp and clear diction:

*Mumsy made me mash my mutton (lips)*

*Twenty tentacles tickling Ted (tongue)*

*Charlie chews his chocolate shoes (jaw)*

*Ricky's sticky yucky duckies (soft palate)*



## Five Qualities of the Human Voice

These five qualities are: volume, pitch, inflection, pace, and articulation.

1. **VOLUME:** A speaker must be able to properly adjust the volume of his voice depending on the audience and setting. Play to the back row, not the front row.
2. **PITCH:** A speaker's pitch should be natural and pleasing. Variety in pitch is essential when speaking or presenting. It is the key to speaking with intention.



### EXERCISE: Pitch for Meaning

The exact same words often have different meanings depending on the pitch of your voice used when speaking. Using the word "okay," vary your pitch to match the expressions below:

- *I understand.*
- *Fantastic!*
- *Do you understand?*
- *I'm very disappointed.*
- *Enough already!*
- *I think you are mistaken.*



### EXERCISE: Eliminating Monotone

To practice varying your pitch, read the excerpt below as if you are reading a fairy tale to a small child, exploring the music of your voice.

*Once upon a time, in a far-off village, there lived a little country girl, the prettiest creature who was ever seen. Her mother was excessively fond of her; and her grandmother doted on her still more. This good woman had a little red riding hood made for her. It suited the girl so extremely well that everyone in the village came to calling her Little Red Riding Hood.*



*There is no index of character so sure as the voice.*

—Benjamin Disraeli

3. **INFLECTION:** A speaker can use vocal inflection in the following ways:

**Upward inflection**—this form of inflection takes the voice up at the end of a word or phrase. It can be used to express doubt, friendliness, surprise and to request information.

**Downward inflection**—this form of inflection takes the pitch of the voice down at the end of a word or phrase. It can be used to express certainty, command, defiance and when giving facts or information.



**How would inflection be used with the following phrases?**

“Hello?”

“It would be a pleasure doing business with you.”

“My rate is \$300/hour.”

“Does that figure sound acceptable to you?”

“I am currently vice-president of sales and marketing.”

4. **PACE:** A speaker should utilize changes in pace to help keep an audience engaged and interested. Think of your speech like a roller coaster. We love roller coasters because they go slow one moment and fast the next—always moving. Vary the pace at which you deliver your speech to give it the feel of a vocal journey.



While most people think at a speed of approximately \_\_\_\_\_ words per minute, the optimal rate for speaking is \_\_\_\_\_ words per minute.



## EXERCISE: Utilizing Pace

To practice slowing your pace, read the following paragraph slowly and aloud, taking a 2-second pause after each period:

*Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you and good evening. My name is Alex Jarrett. The agenda for this meeting has been identified, but unlike most business presentations, the presenter hasn't been provided with a script. As a matter of fact, I have been permitted to choose my own words and discuss my own ideas regarding the choice that we face in the next few weeks. This is a big moment for us. A big moment for our company. The decisions we make today will reverberate within these walls not for months, but for years and decades to come.*

*Silence may be as variously shaded as speech.*

—Edith Wharton

## Power of the Pause

When it comes to pauses, small is not the same as trivial. Use moments of silence for impact. A pause communicates to an audience that you are in charge and are setting the pace and direction of the communication. A pause will help keep you grounded and will create a connection between the voice and the body.

There are three different types of pauses you can use in a communication context:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ These are moments of silence that are dictated by your material or visual aid, allowing your audience to read or absorb information.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ In these instances, you can use silence to evoke or provoke an emotional response from your audience, perhaps pausing for effect to highlight a specific thought or draw attention to a fact or figure.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ These are times during your communication where you need to stop speaking so you can take a breath or a sip of water.



5. **ARTICULATION:** A speaker uses articulation to connect the separate sound units to help form words and phrases. By using your articulators effectively, a speaker will avoid sloppy speech, mumbling and dropping the ends of words or phrases.

There are four movable articulators:

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. <b>Lips</b>        | Sounds formed: m, p, b, w, v, f<br>Warm-up: <i>Mumsy made me mash my mutton.</i>  |
| 2. <b>Jaw</b>         | The jaw is a moveable articulator and changes the size of the vocal tract to help with clarity.<br>Warm-up: <i>Charlie chews his chocolate shoes.</i> |
| 3. <b>Tongue</b>      | Sounds formed: s, z, d, t, th, l, sh, r<br>Warm-up: <i>Twenty tentacles tickling Ted.</i>   |
| 4. <b>Soft palate</b> | Sounds formed: k, g, n, ng<br>Warm-up: <i>Ricky's sticky yucky duckies.</i>   |

#### Tongue Twister warm-ups:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>The skunk thunk the stump stunk</i> | 8. <i>Rubber baby buggy bumpers</i>                                   |
| 2. <i>Good blood, bad blood</i>           | 9. <i>The lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue</i>                  |
| 3. <i>BeBoBa bubble bath</i>              | 10. <i>Bobby Babcock's bagpipes</i>                                   |
| 4. <i>Red leather, yellow leather</i>     | 11. <i>I slit a sheet, a sheet I slit, upon a slitted sheet I sit</i> |
| 5. <i>Ba Da Ga Da, Ba Da Ga Da</i>        | 12. <i>Fresh fried fish, fish fried fresh</i>                         |
| 6. <i>Unique New York</i>                 | 13. <i>A proper cup of coffee in a proper coffee cup</i>              |
| 7. <i>Shave a cedar shingle thin</i>      | 14. <i>The thirty thorny thistles thawed throughout</i>               |

*All I have is a voice.*  
—W.H. Auden