

Taking Care of Your Speaking Voice:

Tips and Exercises for Teachers

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Tips for general health of throat and larynx:

1. Hydration

- Drink plenty of water throughout the day to keep your larynx hydrated.
- Have water or herbal tea at hand to sip during extended teaching.
- Breathe in steam from tea to moisten larynx.
- Suck on hard candy, mints or Slippery Elm lozenges. Avoid menthol.
- Avoid milk, or too much caffeinated tea or coffee while speaking.

2. Breathing

- Breathe fully from the base of your lungs using diaphragmatic breathing.
- Practice exhaling slowly and with control and support.

3. Vocal exercises

- Strengthen your voice and improve your vocal inflection and resonance.
- Monotone and coarse voices cause stress to larynx and vocal folds.
- Good articulation reduces tension and increases projection.
- Warm up by humming, singing, stretching and yawning.

4. Posture and movement

- Stand tall to improve airflow and effective breathing.
- Move around and gesture to relax body, neck and shoulders.

5. Rest your voice

- Try to rest your voice before and after speaking.
- Alternate your speaking with class activities to give voice brief rests.
- Use non-verbal signals to gain student's attention, avoiding shouting.

6. Avoid damaging actions

- Avoid yelling – tightening your throat causes excessive friction to larynx
- Reduce extended loud speaking – use a microphone to aid volume.
- Don't try to compete with background noise - move closer to audience.
- Avoid prolonged speaking if you have a cold or a sore throat.
- Avoid harsh coughing - clear throat gently or sip fluids to sooth throat.
- Avoid gargling with alcohol-based mouthwash.
- Don't smoke. Reduce speaking in smoky or dusty environments.

Your voice as an instrument:

Every instrument has an

- **energizer**
- **vibrator**
- **resonator**
- By understanding the elements of your own vocal instrument (and practicing it) you can improve the strength, stamina, flexibility and expression of your voice.
- You will also find that your listeners find you more interesting to listen to and subsequently your teaching will be more inspiring and effective.



Exercises:

1. Relax the shoulders and body

- Hold arms straight out. Swing arms and torso slowly from side to side.
- Roll shoulders. Lift them up and down, round and round.
- Roll head slowly forward from one shoulder to the other and back.
- Tense fists, arms, face, buttocks, legs and toes. Relax. Repeat.
- Lift arms above head. Breath in deeply. Exhale slowly while dropping arms.

2. Ease the tension from face and jaw, and open your throat

- Stretch your face by lifting eyebrows and opening mouth wide. Scrunch face in by frowning and pursing lips. Repeat.
- Yawn, with exaggeration. Say, "Yah, yah, yah".
- Stretch mouth, with exaggeration by saying, "Eee, ooo, eee, ooo".
- With wide open mouth and throat, holding vowels, say, "Hellooooo! How are yooooou, todaaaaaay?... Iiiii'm fiiiine!"

3. Breath and project effectively

- Stand tall and breath by expanding lower ribs (diaphragmatic breathing)
- Say, "Hoo, Ho, Ha, Hey" with diaphragmatic support. Try it at four varied levels of volume: whisper, voiced whisper, comfortable volume, and loud.
- Breath in deeply. Exhale for as long as possible through pursed lips.
- Say alphabet as many times as possible on one breath. Concentrate on controlling airflow and making voice as resonant as possible.
- Be dramatic! Using diaphragmatic support and open throat, say: "Cry, God for Harry, England and Saint George" or "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears" "The moon never beams without bringing me dreams" "Once upon a midnight dreary, whilst I slept on weak and weary"

4. Articulate carefully

- Practice articulation to relax jaw and produce clearer speech.
- Have fun with articulation practice – try tongue twisters (see p.4)

5. Develop vocal expression and inflection

- Be an instrument! Practice putting "melody" into your voice.
- Read poems or stories. Exaggerate inflection by using a variety of:
 - pitch - voice high and low
 - rate - voice fast and slow
 - force - voice loud and soft

Resources:

The Storyteller's Voice-Care Toolkit by Doug Lipman,

Voice Power: Using Your Voice to Captivate, Persuade, and Command Attention by Renee Grant-Williams

Speak To Influence: How to unlock the hidden power of your voice by Susan Berkley

Speaking Clearly: Improving Voice and Diction by Jeffrey C. Hahner

The Complete Voice and Speech Workout : 75 Exercises for Classroom and Studio Use by Janet Rodgers

Numerous internet resources: Search for *Voice Care* or *Vocal Exercises*.

Put it all together –

Practice breathing, projection, expression and articulation while reading:

I am the very model of a modern Major-General,
I've information vegetable, animal, and mineral,
I know the kings of England, and I quote the fights historical
From Marathon to Waterloo, in order categorical;
I'm very well acquainted, too, with matters mathematical,
I understand equations, both the simple and quadratical,
About binomial theorem I'm teeming with a lot o' news –
With many cheerful facts about the square of the hypotenuse.

I'm very good at integral and differential calculus;
I know the scientific names of beings animalculous:
In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,
I am the very model of a modern Major-General.

I know our mythic history, King Arthur's and Sir Caradoc's;
I answer hard acrostics, I've a pretty taste for paradox,
I quote in elegiacs all the crimes of Heliogabalus,
In conics I can floor peculiarities parabolous;
I can tell undoubted Raphaels from Gerard Dows and Zoffanias,
I know the croaking chorus from the *Frogs* of Aristophanes!
Then I can hum a fugue of which I've heard the music's din afore,
And whistle all the airs from that infernal nonsense *Pinafore*

Then I can write a washing bill in Babylonian cuneiform,
And tell you every detail of Caractacus's uniform:
In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,
I am the very model of a modern Major-General.

In fact, when I know what is meant by "mamelon" and "ravelin",
When I can tell at sight a Mauser rifle from a javelin,
When such affairs as sorties and surprises I'm more wary at,
And when I know precisely what is meant by "commissariat",
When I have learnt what progress has been made in modern gunnery,
When I know more of tactics than a novice in a nunnery;
In short, when I've a smattering of elemental strategy,
You'll say a better Major-General has never sat a gee

For my military knowledge, though I'm plucky and adventury,
Has only been brought down to the beginning of the century;
But still, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,
I am the very model of a modern Major-General.

(W. S. Gilbert, from *The Pirates of Penzance*)

The sixth sheik's
sixth sheep's sick.

~Tongue Twisters~

Sixty-two sick chicks
sat on six slim slick
slender saplings.

*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?*

A SKUNK STOOD ON
A STUMP. THE
STUMP THUNK THE
SKUNK STUNK, BUT
THE SKUNK THUNK
THE STUMP STUNK.

**Sally by the
seashore sells sea
shells. She sells
sea shells by the
seashore.**

*Fanny Finch fried
five floundering
fish for Francis
Fowler's friendly
father.*

Say these 10 times:

toy boat
-
unique New York
-
shave cedar
shingles thin
-
fish sauce shop

Betty Botter bought some butter,
But, she said, the butter's bitter;
If I put it in my batter,
It will make my batter bitter.
But a bit of better Butter
Will make my batter better.
So she bought a bit of butter,
And she put it in her batter,
And the batter was not bitter.
So Better Betty Botter bought
A bit of better Butter
And it made her batter better.

**You know New York, unique New York,
you know you need unique New York.**

If you meet a rapid, rabid rabbit, wrap it!

**What noise annoys an oyster?
A noisy noise annoys an oyster.**

*Moses supposes his toeses are roses.
But Moses supposes erroneously.
For Moses he knowses his
toeses aren't roses
As Moses supposes his toeses to be.*

**Much whirling water
makes the mill wheel
work well.**

**Geese cackle, cattle low,
crows caw, and cocks crow.**

A tutor who tooted the flute
Tried to tutor two tooters to toot.
Said the two to the tutor
"Is it harder to toot or
To tutor two tooters to toot?"

rubber buggy baby bumpers
rubber buggy bumpers
red rubber buggy bumpers
rubber baby buggy bumpers
red rubber baby buggy bumpers

**Gert Sturt put on Bert Sturt's shirt
and Bert Sturt put on Gert Sturt's skirt.**