

# Wolverhampton Speakers Club

## Using Your Voice

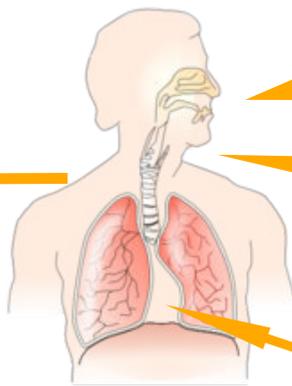


Your public speaking voice is not normally your conversation voice. We are going to show you how you can make your public speaking voice more effective

Yes, we'll find out how we can create 'Voice Music' that audiences enjoy listening to



## Your voice is a wind instrument



Your mouth shapes the sound to make the words

Your larynx makes the sound

Your diaphragm and lungs provide the fuel for your voice: a column of air that gives it power

## The power of your voice

**Power comes from using the 'voice fuel'** – the column of air from your diaphragm and how you let it out and project it. Many of us don't use our 'voice instrument' properly and so come over as strained and weak when we speak in public.

Breathe from the diaphragm (not shallow breaths from the upper chest) so as to release the energy stored in your column of air (you will also find that this helps to slow you down if you speak too quickly).

Don't speak from your throat – your voice will have little power and you will soon strain your voice.

Imagine that your voice skims the front teeth as it leaves your mouth.

You need to open your mouth sufficiently ... on average:

- One finger width when speaking
- Maybe even two fingers when practising

Opening your mouth more will automatically slow you down if you speak too quickly.

Opening your mouth more, together with taking care over your breathing, will give you stronger speech, clearer speech and a more relaxed pace.

Your voice sounds more powerful to you than it does to your audience.

Don't hold the lectern – it makes you tense and constricts the lungs and so reduces your power.

## The Four Magic P's of Public Speaking

**Your voice is the most powerful weapon in your armoury.** Not surprisingly your voice and the way you use it is so important that you might fear that your voice is not good enough.

The good news is that there are speaking techniques that you can use.



We've come up with four 'magic P's' - techniques you can use to transform your speaking:

- Pronunciation
- Pitch
- Pace
- Pause

## Pronunciation

You might think that pronunciation is so obvious that we just take it for granted - but there are some hints and techniques that we can give you.



Obviously your audience needs to understand what you are saying! Pronunciation is what gives this the final gloss, even if you have a regional or national accent.

Vowels and consonants are things that we need to think about - they have different sounds and purposes and the way that you pronounce them can help your speech a lot.

## Consonants

- Formed mainly by the teeth, lips and tongue
- Need to be crisp and sounded – for example, it could be embarrassing if you don't say 'vowel' & 'bowel' clearly!
- Try to sound consonants at the beginning and end of each word
- Tongue twisters exercise the tongue

## Vowels

- The resonance of your voice is largely connected to the vowel sounds – vowels are the key
- The mouth is open when producing vowels - make sure you open your mouth wide enough
- Vowels use most of the breath
- Vowels arise from the shape of mouth
- The stresses come on the vowels

## Tailing off

Very often speakers drop their voice or 'swallow' the ends of phrases or sentences – the last few words are lost, leading to a loss of clarity.

- Sometimes this is caused if the speaker runs out of breath
- Sometimes there is a premature relaxation of the voice
- Maintain your breathing throughout and breathe strongly right through the end of the phrase
- A pause, naturally placed, somewhere near the end of a sentence can often help with breathing

## Pitch



What do we mean by 'pitch'?

Pitch is all about the way we vary our voice - the way our voice rises and falls, the way we vary the volume and tone.

This is one of the ways we get the 'voice music' that we need.



**Don't kill your speech with monotony.** Vary the pitch, volume and tone of your voice to correspond with what you are saying. Work out the climaxes of your speech and use your voice to rise to them – you could mark them in your speaking notes if you want to, just like on a music score.

In conversation we often use just 2-3 pitches (the rises and falls of our voice - high and low), but we have over 20 to call on, so we should develop and practise a range of pitches that we can use when we are speaking in public.

The volume is most easily controlled when you utilise the power developed by correct breathing.

Try varying how you produce the same word using consonants and vowels and volume to produce different tones - sweet, aggressive, sarcastic, soothing etc. This will add to your armoury of expressions.

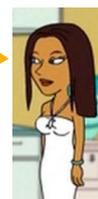
## Pace



'Pace' is the speed at which you speak, so learn to vary it and control it!

Why don't we just call it 'speed'?

Because it doesn't begin with 'P'!



**Pace adds one more level of variety to your speech** and adds interest as you speed up and slow down – in the appropriate places, of course!

Many speakers speak too quickly and at the same pace, especially when nervous

If you speak too quickly you are not:

- Able to breathe well
- Able to open the mouth sufficiently
- Able to articulate clearly because the vowels are cut short and blend with the consonants, turning the speech into a jumble

A few speak too slowly, at the same pace, and sound ponderous. If you speak too slowly your audience are likely to lose interest.

**If you find that you are speaking too quickly**, take a deep breath, pause, and consciously try to slow down. One very good way to slow down the pace of your speaking is to open your mouth wider as you speak - this automatically slows you down and also helps with your pronunciation.

Remember also that the larger the audience and the larger the venue the slower you need to speak.

Sometimes it's difficult to know whether you are speaking too fast - someone might need to tell you!

## Pause



Do you hear all those pauses?

No, of course not!

That's why they're important ...

Pardon?



Pauses are so important even though you can't hear them – **because** you can't hear them! Silence is not only golden it is powerful.

Pauses allow breathing space for you and your audience. They allow you to pause for emphasis or effect, or to give your audience chance to react to something you've said.

Pauses are like the white space on a page – imagine these pages as just one block of text (without Jasmine and me being there): the meaning would be very difficult to follow, if not incomprehensible, and you would soon give up.

Pauses help your breathing and allow you to control the emphasis and timing of your speech.

Pauses give the audience time for reflection - and also give you time to look at your notes



So, remember how your voice is produced so that you can use it properly.

Correct use of breathing techniques, opening the mouth sufficiently and attending to the 4 P's will help you to achieve the 'Voice Music' that is so effective in communicating with an audience. Keep your voice flexible.

I think that's everything isn't it Jasmine?

I think so Dave - that's very good and we really should try to use everything - especially the four P's.

But .... maybe there's one extra 'P' missing .... '**Performance**' - but we can talk about that another time!

