

Top tips on voice care and projection

Our voices are a key part of our identity. We use them to communicate with our families, friends, work colleagues and wider society. They convey our thoughts and feelings, and enable us to make an impact, whether we are speaking, shouting, cheering or singing. It is important that we take care of our voices to avoid long-term problems, particularly if public speaking is part of our everyday life. Here are some top tips from expert speech and language therapists on how you can care for and project your voice.

Caring for your voice

General advice

- Aim for good hydration; drinking 8-10 glasses of water a day is recommended as dehydration, caused by alcohol or caffeine in drinks, can lead to vocal cord irritation.
- If you are hoarse, don't whisper - use your voice gently to avoid strain.
- Try to 'warm up' your voice, through gentle humming or speaking, before a lot of public speaking.
- Ensure adequate sleep and exercise, because your voice reflects your general health and wellbeing.

Avoid the following

- Avoid long periods of overuse, especially speaking over background noise.
- Heartburn/reflux can lead to vocal cord irritation so avoid foods that cause indigestion and avoid eating late at night.
- Reduce/avoid smoking. Smoke irritates the vocal cords and causes them to swell.
- Avoid lots of dairy produce as this can cause thick secretions and throat clearing.
- Throat clearing leads to vocal cord irritation, so try to avoid this by coughing gently or sipping water.



Projecting your voice

General advice

- Aim for an open and relaxed stance with weight evenly distributed and balanced posture.
- Wear comfortable shoes and clothes.
- Try to develop a relaxed voice production technique with controlled breathing.
- Clear articulation and a good range of intonation facilitate voice projection.
- Emphasis, energy and variety project the voice better than a loud and strained voice.

Avoid the following

- Poor posture affects vocal delivery, so locked knees, weight on one leg, raised shoulders and forward thrust of the head and neck should be avoided.
- Pushing the vocal volume leads to a constricted and often harsh vocal pitch.
- A monotonous vocal range may encourage the listener to 'switch off'.
- Disconnection with the material may lead to an 'automatic' delivery, so listeners feel disengaged.

Pay attention to the environment

- Be aware of the acoustics of the space to determine the amount of reverberation (vibrations and/or echo from your voice).
- When speaking outdoors, if possible stand on a platform or with a wall behind you.
- When possible, use amplification to avoid voice strain.
- Have a sense of ownership of the space.
- Create a positive attitude to and connection with your audience.