

Turn Up The Volume

How to develop a strong and powerful speaking voice

For the many public speaker's volume can be an issue, it is crucial to your success to be heard at the very back of the room not just by a couple of rows of people right in front of you. Don't wait until you are faced with a large room to realise you need to increase the volume of your voice. It is also important to understand that furnishings, carpets and curtains absorb sound so the need for volume is required even more so. For your voice to work optimally you need to get to know it a little and understand how you actually make sound.

Place your hands on your belly and make a 'shushing' sound out loud. You will notice how many muscles are actually involved in producing this one sound. It actually takes 75% of your bodies energy to produce sound, and this is done unconsciously, and automatically so imagine what a fabulous sound you could make if you were to do it with intention, putting some energy behind it.

Now, put one of your hands around your throat and make a sound as if you have just swallowed a delicious piece of chocolate cake. "Mmmmm....." make this sound out loud. Can you feel a vibration under your hand? This vibration is the result of air coming up through your lungs and being squeezed by your larynx to make sound. This may be the first time you have acknowledged how this amazing instrument actually works. It may up until now, have been a total mystery to you. Welcome to my wonderful world of the voice! Work with me on this as the rewards to you as a speaker are so beneficial. Here are five tips to help you increase your volume and develop your tone, quality and the resonance of your voice.

Breathing:

In order to produce sound, we need air, we need breath. So often there is no where near enough air in our lungs because we do not breathe deeply enough. Good deep breathing is the first step to improving the depth and volume of your voice. Good consistent deep breathing also has the added benefit of calming the nervous system, so those feelings of anxiety often associated with public speaking can be calmed and eliminated completely with consistent deep breathing techniques.

Here is a video to help you understand how to improve your breathing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mTMmdwkXQU>

Supportive posture:

In order to improve and increase volume, the chest, shoulders and neck need to be relaxed. By doing some shoulder rolls, in both directions you will release tension in the neck and shoulders. To expand the chest, breathe in and bring the hands in towards the chest. When you breath out release the arms out at shoulder height. Stretch the arms outwards. Breath in as you bring the hands back into the chest and repeat the same movement as before. Repeat this several times releasing all tension, expanding the lungs and opening the chest to increase your ability to breathe even more deeply. Opening your arms wide as you breath out will expand your rib cage and allow your lungs to expand. This will release any tension out of your chest and shoulders. When you start to speak ensure your spine is straight and chest open, this will give you a much better opportunity to project your voice.

Here is a video to help you understand how to improve your posture to support you when you speak:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nq97dKzzmOw>

Head position:

As I mentioned earlier, your voice is created as a result of air coming up from your lungs and being squeezed by the larynx. You will lose volume if the voice box is compromised by your head being dropped or held too high. Try saying this phrase, a 'tongue twister' out loud - ***"Which wristwatches are swiss wristwatches?"***

Say this firstly with your head in a **neutral position** - chin up looking straight ahead.

Drop your head **slightly down** and repeat the phrase out loud. You will find it difficult to create volume and projection with your head in this position.

Return your head to the first neutral position and then **lift the head slightly** so the chin is angled up a little. Repeat the phrase out loud once more. Again, you will find your volume is crushed and it is not possible to project your voice with your head at this angle.

Now return your head to the **first neutral position** and see how much louder your voice sounds. It is so much easier to get more volume if the head is in the right position.

This exercise is a great one to help you identify and understand where you may be losing power simply because of the way you hold your head.

This video will help to explain this more clearly:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgy2oUeyoAs>

Warm up your voice:

Tongue twisters are a wonderful way to warm up the voice. They have the added benefit of also helping you to avoid 'tongue trips' when you speak and will also help you better articulate your words. Below are four tongue twisters, say each one out loud and repeat four or five times. Start each one quietly and work up in volume aiming to increase your volume a little with each repetition. You may feel a little silly and the phrases are certainly odd but they are very beneficial to build volume and tone in your voice. Just as an athlete would not run a 15-KM race without limbering up, you need to be aware how important it is to warm up your voice if you are looking to increase volume without strain and shouting.

Go slow Joe, you're stepping on my toe

Sheep shears should be sharp

Thoughtful thinkers think things through

These thousand tricky tongue twisters trip thrillingly off the tongue

Here is a video to explain how to do this:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHHvhqLEDp8>

Laugh out loud:

This is a fun exercise, good for you on many levels because laughter whether real or induced results in the release of feel good hormones, a great pay off for your efforts to increase your speaking volume and improve tone, depth and resonance.

Take a deep breath in and begin to breathe out making the phrase **"Ha Ha Ha"** keep repeating the **Ha Ha Ha's** until you run out of breath. Take another deep breath and repeat, this time a little louder. After several repetitions changed to **Ho Ho Ho**, then **He He He** then **Hoo Hoo Hoo** then revert back to **Ha Ha Ha** repeating the whole exercise as many times as you wish to. This exercise will strengthen your diaphragm and improve your breath control. It will also help you discover where your natural pitch and volume sit. You can experiment with building volume by doing this exercise on a regular basis.

For help doing these exercises I have created a short video here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSQ-gJjYy5I>

By using these tips, you cannot fail to increase your volume, the depth and quality of your voice and improve overall engagement with your audience when you speak. If you are a naturally soft speaker and struggle to be heard these exercises are a good place to start to build more volume and confidence in your voice. On some occasions you will have the use of a microphone, but on many occasions, you may not, so having great volume is a great benefit to any speaker.