



Sustaining Your Voice

Tools for Teachers in the Classroom





VOICE & SPEECH THERAPY CALGARY
Anna Kommes, R.SLP, S-LP(C)
Speech-Language Pathologist

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About me....


- Speech-Language Pathologist for 18 years
- In private practice for 8 years
 - Children 5+ to adult
 - All things speech and voice!
- Yoga teacher



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Speech-Language Pathologist

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Learning Objectives:



1. Common voicing issues that teachers experience.
2. Learn the fundamentals of voicing.
3. Ways to optimize your vocal efficiency.

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Reflection



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- 50-60% of teachers report voice symptoms at the end of their day.
- Female teachers are 1.6x more likely to develop a voice disorder compared with male teachers.
 - Contributing factors include:
 - Anatomy/physiology
 - Use patterns
 - Symptom awareness & reporting




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Common voice issues include:

- Vocal fatigue / tired or effortful voice.
- Hoarseness and dysphonia.
- Dry throat and irritation.
- Voice problems affecting work performance and absenteeism.
- Chronic or intermittent voice difficulties over time.



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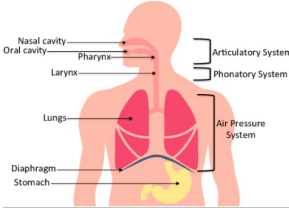
Risk Factors

1. Speaking loudly / vocal strain and prolonged voice use.
2. Reflux, upper respiratory conditions, throat clearing, coughing.
3. Gender and personal health factors.
4. Workload, teaching hours, and lessons per week.
5. Noise and classroom environmental demands.

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Subsystems of Voice: Power (Breath)



Diaphragm: main muscle for inhalation. Belly moves out. Upper body is still.

Core (internal intercostals): main muscles for exhalation. VOICING IS AN EXHALE TASK. Belly moves in.

Avoid shallow, upper body breathing.

- Overuse of neck accessory muscles to lift ribcage to make space for air.

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Subsystems of Voice: Source (Vocal Folds)

www.adams-voice.com/blog/vocal-anatomy.

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Subsystems of Voice: Filter (Resonance)

www.emmadeanssing.com.au/uncategorized/what-is-vocal-resonance/

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Optimizing Power

Nasal Breathing

Filters and warms/cools air, sinuses produce nitric oxide, facilitates oxygen absorption, calming for the body, reduces breathing difficulties (sleep apnea, snoring).

Snuff Hiss

Purpose: To activate the internal intercostals and diaphragm muscles.
Method: Take short, quick breaths in through your nose. Then sustain a loud /sssss/ sound. Notice the muscles activated. Hold the breath out for 3 counts. Relax the muscles engaged.

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Optimizing Source: Hydration!

Purpose: Adequate hydration allows your vocal folds to vibrate with less “pushing”. Well-hydrated vocal folds (VFs) resist injury and recover better. Hydration keeps mucus/phlegm thin and easy to manage and reduces throat clearing/coughing.

Internal Hydration:

- Drink enough fluid to “Pee pale, speak clear!”
- Small sips are best
- Takes 24 hours to get to VFs

External Hydration:

- Humidify the air in your environment
- Steaming (personal device, shower)
- Use a **nebulizer** with 0.9% isotonic saline

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Optimizing Source: Pre & Post Vocal Use

Observe, don't judge, don't react.

0- Feels great!
 1- I'd like a little improvement
 2- I could use moderate improvement
 3- I need serious change to happen

Before:
 Sound rating:
 Effort rating:
 Any observations?



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Laryngeal Massage

**Be mindful of carotid artery. Coughing may be due to stimulation of recurrent laryngeal nerve.

Purpose: Reduce tension, prepare voice, rebalance muscles and restore voice quality after extended voice use.

Keep head in a neutral position

1. Back of neck squeeze
2. Masseter massage (upper and lower)
3. Tongue press
4. Candy cane massage down length of larynx
5. Tug & Tug with voice (who, ho, hah, he)
6. Wiggles



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Semi-Occluded Vocal Tract (SOVT) Exercises

Purpose: To help the voice produce sound more efficiently and with less strain. Your SOVT voice is your optimal voice.

How to do: Complete an exercise that *partially closes* the mouth with sound (vocal fold vibration). This occlusion creates back pressure, which balances back pressure and resistance.

Examples of SOVTs: Lip/tongue trills, fricatives (v, z, zh), gargling, cup bubbles, straw phonation (smaller/larger diameter), Kazoo puffer fish, bubble blowing.



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Vocal Warm-Up & Cool Down

1. Take a low comfortable breath.
2. Do an SOVT at a steady, comfortable pitch. Repeat 3-5 times.
3. Make small siren sounds, up and down, around your comfortable pitch. Repeat 3-5 times.
4. Start low and slide to your top pitch. Take a breath and slide low to your lowest pitch. Repeat 3-5 times.

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Observations

After:
 Sound rating:
 Effort rating:
 Any observations?

0- Feels great!
 1- I'd like a little improvement
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Optimizing Source: Hard Swallow

Purpose: Reduce frequency and intensity of cough and throat clear. Can act as a “reset” for the larynx.

1. Do at the *first sign* of irritation.
2. Swallow with tongue pressed against the roof of the mouth. Hold the swallow.
3. Tuck chin to chest.
4. Bear down (*slight* Valsalva maneuver).
5. Repeat



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Optimizing Filter

Resonant voice: Find voice at the front of the face (the mask). Can be found by humming-regulating the amount of energy you're using.

Calling versus yelling- chin up, think about the voice going up and over (rather than through).

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Acoustics in the classroom



- Use your classroom to amplify your voice.
- Reduce background noise at the source.
- Bring students closer instead of getting louder.
- Use amplification and visual supports when possible.

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When to get help

- Voice changes that are lasting longer than 3 weeks.
 - *Request a referral to an ENT (laryngologist) from your doctor.
- Your voicing issue is affecting your quality of life.
- Recurrent/chronic voice issues.

Questions to ask...

- What is your background in voice?
- What is your training in voice rehabilitation?
- How do you approach assessment and treatment?



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Questions



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Speech-Language Pathologist

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Speech-Language Pathologist

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Speech-Language Pathologist

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