



Voice care for teachers and lecturers

If you are worried about your voice, you are not alone. We receive many calls from teachers and lecturers who are worried about their voice and the fact that they are suffering increasingly from sore throats and hoarseness. This concern is understandable because a teacher or lecturer's voice is the main 'tool and instrument' of their profession.

Whether delivering a lecture, class, group or individual lesson, communication is largely dependent on the voice. It is the medium by which teachers and lecturers ask and answer questions, communicate instructions, praise, give admonishments, etc. Talking is central to the role.

The very environment of the classroom or lecture hall can accelerate the wear and tear on the voice because of the every day demands, the apparent lack of recovery time between periods of use, and the potential noise of the classroom (background and foreground).

A teacher or lecturer is as much dependent on their voice as any actor. Unfortunately, they do not usually receive any vocal training so it is all the more important for you to recognize the need to consider ways in which you can look after this most crucial 'instrument' of your profession.

Tips to care for your voice

The following are some pointers to consider when looking after the voice:

- Make a point of drinking plenty of water during the day. Constantly talking, possibly in a dry atmosphere, takes its toll so take regular sips of water throughout the day will ensure your throat is lubricated.
- When speaking it is important, whenever possible, to stand up straight and keep your eyes forward, so giving a ninety degree angle between your spine and line of vision.
- Try to monitor the volume at which you talk. Avoid shouting because, if you consistently talk at this level, not only do you strain your voice, you also leave yourself 'nowhere to go' when the need does arise. If you do need to shout, try to drop the volume as soon as possible. This often also aids in emphasizing a point. Generally, if you can maintain a quieter voice, the students will be more attentive and you will be developing their listening skills at the same time.

- Rest your voice whenever it is possible.
- Not only is it good practice to vary the tone of your voice, it is equally important to monitor the speed at which you speak.

Try to get into the habit of listening to yourself in class or in lectures. Speed up, or slow down where appropriate, but be wary of speaking quickly all the time because this can be an indication of general tenseness. This, in turn has an adverse effect on your voice.

- Try to introduce as many non-verbal signs, or body language, that your pupils or students recognize in order to reduce the use of your voice. Different facial expressions can convey a wealth of meanings.
- Make sure you take your breaks during the day. Get into the staffroom. Not only is this your right, it is also your need if you are going to take your general health and wellbeing seriously. Speaking with colleagues in a different environment can benefit your voice.
- Search for voice training or speech classes in your area. A good place to begin might be the music department at your local university, or perhaps your school has its own music or drama department.

If you continue to feel worried about your voice, you should visit your doctor/physician and seek his/her advice.

Where can I find more support?

If you are an educator from one of the districts that have signed up to this service and you wish to speak to a qualified counselor, you can call the toll free Educator Support Line on 1-877-876-4327.