**A blue square with black text

AI-generated content may be incorrect.WANT TO SPEAK WITH GREATER *IMPACT?***

**TRY THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD VOCAL EXPRESSIVENESS**

**STRESSING WORDS IN SENTENCES (CONTENT vs. FUNCTION WORDS) AND FOCUS WORDS**

**When speaking for impact, it is important to use your voice to capture and maintain your listeners attention. Most listeners attend 8 seconds at a time! You need to add vocal variety every 8 seconds to keep them listening. This can be accomplished both by creating content that is interesting, using your voice to create interest, and helping your listener’s process the important information easily. We create interest using our voice, and highlight important words to process through stress, duration, rate, pitch (intonation and melody of our language).**

**Say the following sentences and record yourself:**

I like to eat Pizza.

I need to go to Target today to get some paper.

Here is the finished product.

Lets go to the new Star Wars movie.

Do you like to workout at the gym?

What’s your favorite tv show?

When did you go to Florida?

Can you pass the salt?

What time is the meeting?

Do you have a cat?

**Content vs. function words**

**When we are speaking in sentences, we can divide them into content vs. function words.**

Content words carry the meaning of the sentence and include nouns (tree, John), verbs (walk, read), adjectives (yellow, big, five) and adverbs (happily, fast). They can also be “wh” words, and interjections (ie. “wow”). We often add new content words to our language (ie. “google, skype”). Content words are *stressed.* They are louder, longer, higher (or sometimes lower) in pitch then function words.

Function words serve a grammatical function. They are the “glue” that holds the sentence together, but they do not carry much of the meaning. They include pronouns (he, she, it), articles (a, the), prepositions (on, in), quantifiers (a few, several), and conjunctions (and, but, or). Function words are like the glue of the sentence. Function words are de-stressed. We go over them quickly in the sentence.

Some words can fall into both categories depending on how they are used ( ie. “have- I have a nice house” is a content, but “I have been there before” is a function because it acts as more of a helping verb.

**Lets practice! Can you identify the content and function words in each sentence?**

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**Here the content words are highlighted. Can you stress the content words- they will be longer in duration, change in pitch and volume.**

I **like** to **eat Pizza**.

I **need** to **go** to **Target** todayto **get** some **paper.**

**Here** is the **finished product**.

Lets **go** to the **new Star** Wars **movie**.

Do you **like** to **workout** at the **gym**?

**What**’s your **favorite** t**v show**?

**When** did you **go** to **Florida**?

Can you **pass** the **salt**?

What **time** is the **meeting**?

Do you **have** a **cat?**

**Focus words:**

The most important content word will get the most stress! We might stress it by adding a pause before and/or after, making it different than the other content words by making it a different pitch, loudness, or longer in duration. Often, it is the final content word of a clause or chunk of words that go together. Can you pick out one word to focus?

I **like** to **eat Pizza**.

I **need** to **go** to **Target** todayto **get** some **paper.**

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Do you **have** a **cat?**

Lets talk about those function words!! Again, they are like the glue of the sentence, we go over them quickly. Sometimes even dropping or reducing sounds. Lets practice! Can you reduce the highlighted words?

**Destressed function words (to, for, the, him, his, her, and….)**

1. Lets go **to** the store (lets go d’ the store)
2. I could **have** done it ( I could uv done it)
3. I **can** run fast ( I kn run fast)
4. Do you need **him** **to** help? (do you need im t’ help?)
5. One is **for** luck. (fer)
6. Did you borrow it **or** buy it? (er)
7. One **of** the best books I’ve read is Moby Dick. (v)
8. What is **your** favorite movie? (yer)
9. I would like **for** him **to** finish his work. ( fer, t’)

Can you put **the** document **and** invoice in **the** file? (th’, n)

**Putting it all together:** Finally, re-record yourself producing the following sentences, this time stressing content words, de-emphasizing function words, and picking out a focus word to say with extra stress.

For example:

I like to eat Pizza = I **like** t**’eat**/***PIZZA (stress “like, eat”, pause at / then with a change (louder, softer, higher or lower pitch) and longer vowel “Peeeeza”, emphasize the focus word “Pizza”. )***

I **need** to **go** to **Target** todayto **get** some **paper.**

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**Reflection:** Review the before /after recordings. How does it sound? Would you change anything? What other word could become a focus word? How else could you emphasize it?