

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Your voice has a major effect on your audience. A lively, exciting voice attracts and keeps listeners' attention. A speaking voice should be pleasant, natural, forceful, expressive, and easily heard. Use volume, pitch, rate, and quality as well as appropriate pauses to reflect and add meaning and interest to your message. Your voice should reflect the thoughts you are presenting. Review *Your Speaking Voice* (Item 199)—a free PDF at [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org).

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ▶ Use voice volume, pitch, rate, and quality to reflect and add meaning and interest to your message.
- ▶ Use pauses to enhance your message.
- ▶ Use vocal variety smoothly and naturally.

**Time:** Five to seven minutes

# VOCAL VARIETY

Your voice is the link between you and your listeners. It is the primary medium for conveying your message. What kind of voice do you have? Is it rich, exciting and easy to listen to? All speakers should work to develop a voice that enhances their words and attracts listeners' attention. A good speaking voice has several qualities. It is:

**Pleasant**, conveying a sense of friendliness.

**Natural**, reflecting the true personality and sincerity of the speaker.

**Forceful**, conveying vitality and strength, even when it isn't especially loud.

**Expressive**, demonstrating various shades of meaning, never sounding monotonous and emotionless.

**Easily heard**, as a result of proper volume and clear articulation.

If listeners can't hear you, or if they find your voice annoying, they will not pay attention and your message will be lost.

## THE ROLE OF POSTURE AND BREATHING

A good-quality voice begins with good breathing. Your voice is supported by a column of air. The depth and steadiness of this air affects your voice. You'll find that breathing deeply, from your abdomen or lower chest, will provide better vocal quality than breathing shallowly from your upper chest. Abdominal breathing will help you manage your breathing as you speak. Inhale during logical pauses in your speech, before you run out of air. Then release the air slowly so you don't run out of air or lose projection after the first few words.

Posture has a great impact on your voice. Air must flow freely through your lungs and vocal chords. If you slouch when speaking, with your shoulders hunched and your head down, your lungs and vocal chords are blocked and air flow is reduced. For maximum control of

your breath and voice when you speak, stand straight, knees slightly flexed, head straight and shoulders back.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD VOICE

A good speaking voice should be balanced between extremes of volume, pitch, rate, and quality.

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**Volume.** Being able to control the loudness or softness of your voice helps to keep the audience's attention. Speaking too loudly for a long time will bother your audience. Speaking too softly for a long time will annoy listeners too, as they struggle to grasp your words. Volume level depends on the size and shape of the room. However, you should also vary your volume level for emphasis. For example, if you're conveying anger, you will want to increase your volume. If you are sharing something secretive with the audience, lower the volume.

**Pitch.** The pitch of a sound is how high or low it is on the musical scale. Vary your pitch as you speak—droning on in a monotone voice will quickly put listeners to sleep, and speaking in a squeaking voice will make them want to cover their ears. You should adapt the pitch of your voice to the material you are presenting. For example, a high pitch conveys excitement and enthusiasm, while a low pitch indicates sadness or thoughtfulness.

**Rate.** This is the number of words you speak per minute. Speak too fast and your audience will not be able to keep up with you. Speak too slowly and your listeners will lose interest. You want to speak fast enough so that people have to pay attention, but slow enough that they can digest what you are saying. The most effective speaking rate is approximately 125-160 words a minute. You should vary the rate, moving quickly through some of the material but slowing to emphasize important information or to communicate a complex idea.

**Quality.** Your voice should convey friendliness, naturalness, and confidence, and be enjoyable and pleasant to the ears. Listen to yourself on tape. Does your voice sound harsh, breathy, shrill, thin, or nasal? You can improve it by relaxing, eliminating any tension from your voice.

Your voice should be expressive to add meaning to the words you use, enhance your message, and add interest for the audience.

## SILENCE CAN BE GOLDEN

At times you won't want to use your voice. Well-timed silences or pauses add impact to your words and are a powerful speaking technique. A pause can be used to:

- ▶ **Emphasize your main points.** A moment of silence before a statement tells listeners that you are about to say something important. A brief pause after you make a statement tells listeners that what you just said is important.
- ▶ **Breathe.** Appropriate pauses are your opportunity to inhale.
- ▶ **Punctuate.** Pauses often serve as punctuation, telling listeners that you have ended a sentence or thought.
- ▶ **Attract attention.** When you feel that listeners are distracted, pause. Your silence will attract their attention back to you.

## BE EXPRESSIVE

Your voice should be expressive, showing a wide range of emotion. An expressive voice adds more meaning to the words you use, enhances your message, and adds interest for your audience. Read these passages aloud using the tone of voice appropriate to each:

*I appreciate all you have done for me, and I hope to return the favor some day.*  
(simple, honest statement, or sarcasm)

*Kindness! Do you call that kindness? I wouldn't treat a stray dog the way you've treated me!*  
(resentment, anger, unfriendliness)

*If each of us does one kind thing for someone else every day, we could help make the world a better place to live.* (deep feeling of earnestness and conviction)

Notice how your tone and effect vary with the different thoughts you express. See how easy it is to change the meaning by changing your emphasis.

As another experiment, call a friend on the telephone and talk for several minutes on some topic of mutual interest. Vary your tone of voice, rate, pitch, and volume. Use pauses to emphasize a point or arouse interest in what you will say next. At the same time, keep your vocal experimentation within the context of normal conversation.

### **THE VALUE OF REHEARSAL**

Like body language, your speaking voice should be natural and consistent with the meaning of the words being spoken. Achieving a speaking voice that is comfortable for you and enjoyable for the audience takes thought and practice.

After you have drafted your speech, read it and note any places where you can vary the rate, pitch, volume, and vocal quality, or pause to add emphasis and meaning. Speak clearly and project your voice. Try several different methods to see which one is most effective.

Match vocal variety to your words. You should be compelled to change your voice when your thought or words require it. Don't worry if at first your efforts at vocal variety are awkward. The more you rehearse your speech and become familiar with your voice, the more comfortable you will become. If you have access to an audio recorder, use it in rehearsals to help you improve.

### **YOUR ASSIGNMENT**

This speech focuses on vocal variety.

- ▶ Choose a subject that calls for vocal variety. It could be a topic that requires a display of emotion, one that enables you to quote or imitate different tones of voice or manners of speaking, or one that involves a great deal of description.
- ▶ Use a voice that is pleasing to listen to, with proper balance of volume, pitch, and rate.
- ▶ Use pauses to enhance your message.
- ▶ Use your voice to reflect and add meaning and interest to the thoughts you are presenting.

Be sure to incorporate what you've learned in previous projects about purpose, organization, word usage, and body language, and use appropriate suggestions from the evaluations you received. As you prepare your speech, review the Speaker's Checklist in Project 1 and *Your Speaking Voice* (Item 199), a free PDF available at [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org).

# EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **VOCAL VARIETY**

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Note to the Evaluator:** The speaker is to use a voice that is pleasing to listen to, with proper balance of volume, pitch, and rate, and use pauses to enhance his or her message. The speaker's voice should reflect and add meaning to the thoughts he or she is presenting. The speaker is to incorporate lessons learned in previous projects about purpose, organization, word usage, and body language. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete this evaluation form by checking the appropriate space for each category. Add comments where praise is warranted or where you can offer specific suggestions for improvement.

- |                           |                                  |                  |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| ▶ <b>Topic selection:</b> | ___ Facilitated vocal variety    | ___ Satisfactory | ___ Could improve          |
| ▶ <b>Volume:</b>          | ___ Excellent                    | ___ Satisfactory | ___ Too loud or soft       |
| ▶ <b>Rate:</b>            | ___ Excellent, varied            | ___ Satisfactory | ___ Too fast or too slow   |
| ▶ <b>Pitch:</b>           | ___ Varied, conversational       | ___ Satisfactory | ___ Monotonous, artificial |
| ▶ <b>Quality:</b>         | ___ Pleasant, friendly           | ___ Satisfactory | ___ Harsh, monotonous      |
| ▶ <b>Pauses:</b>          | ___ Appropriate, effective       | ___ Satisfactory | ___ Could improve          |
| ▶ <b>Expressiveness:</b>  | ___ Conveyed emotion, meaning    | ___ Satisfactory | ___ Could improve          |
| ▶ <b>Vocal variety:</b>   | ___ Enhanced speech              | ___ Satisfactory | ___ Could improve          |
| ▶ <b>Organization:</b>    | ___ Logical flow of ideas        | ___ Satisfactory | ___ Should improve         |
| ▶ <b>Word usage:</b>      | ___ Vivid, descriptive, accurate | ___ Satisfactory | ___ Could improve          |
| ▶ <b>Body language:</b>   | ___ Natural, expressive          | ___ Satisfactory | ___ Unnatural, distracting |

▶ What could the speaker have done differently to make the speech more effective?

▶ What did you like about the speech?

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Your speech will be more effective if you can support your main points with statistics, testimony, stories, anecdotes, examples, visual aids, and facts. You can find this material on the Internet, at a library, and in other places. Use information collected from numerous sources and carefully support points with specific facts, examples, and illustrations, rather than with just your own opinions.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ▶ Collect information about your topic from numerous sources.
- ▶ Carefully support your points and opinions with specific facts, examples, and illustrations gathered through research.

**Time:** Five to seven minutes

## RESEARCH YOUR TOPIC

The most challenging part of preparing a speech is gathering the material. If you want to convince an audience, you need the facts to support your message. But how do you find the information you need?

In Project 2 you learned about the different types of support material:

- ▶ **Statistics.** These are numerical ways of conveying information about incidents, data, and events.
- ▶ **Testimony.** These are quotes or opinions from people with expertise on a particular subject.
- ▶ **Examples, stories, or anecdotes.** These relate an event that happened to you or someone you know, or someone you've read about.
- ▶ **Visual aids.** These could be diagrams, charts, pictures, models, or other objects. (More information about using visual aids appears in Project 8.)
- ▶ **Facts.** Facts are verifiable information.

Lots of resources offer these types of information. Your challenge is to find the ones that will help you with your presentation.

### HOW TO BEGIN

Start your research by compiling what you already know or have on your speech subject. You may have had personal experience with the subject matter, perhaps even have files, magazines, and other literature about it. Organize what you already know or have and see where any gaps exist. Your research goal will be to fill in these gaps.

### SEARCH THE WEB

Today the most convenient research source is the Internet. You can comfortably sit at your desk with your personal computer and find a variety of information on numerous subjects on the Internet through common search engines such as Yahoo and Google. Some encyclopedia companies put versions of their books online. Many magazines and newspapers are available online too. Government agencies post information and statistics, and so do publishers of books and journals. You'll also find sites containing quotations, biographies, and other helpful resources. Much of the information you'll find from these sources is free; some sources may charge per use, monthly, or annual fees for access to their data. Because the Web contains so much data, finding the specific information

you're looking for will take time. In some cases, you may not find the substantive information you need.

Search engines are software tools that allow you to ask for a list of Web pages containing certain words or phrases from a search index. The search engine then indexes the findings for your review.

If you are looking for information on breeding Siamese cats, for example, you could type "Siamese cats" in the search box. The search engine then looks for Web pages containing the words, combinations, or phrases containing the words "Siamese cats." You can program the engine to look for an exact match or for a close match. Usually the engine will rank its findings based on their closeness to the words you typed. Be aware, though, that the process is automated. No person screens the Web pages to see whether they are applicable to your needs. For example, someone's personal Web page may contain the words "Siamese cats" only as it relates to his or her family's pets.

For best results, define your search as narrowly as possible. "Siamese cats" yields an index of more than one million Web pages—a lot for you to review. "Applehead Siamese cats" yields about 40,000 Web pages—more manageable. "Breeding Applehead Siamese cats" results in about 10,000 Web pages, even better yet.

Be thorough in your search and remember to use a variety of search engines. One engine may produce a larger index than another and provide that select piece of information you are seeking, while others may offer next to nothing on your topic. You'll find more information about the various search engines available and how to use them on the Internet by typing "search engines" in the "search" box on your Web browser.

Web directories can be useful too. Similar to a subject index in a library, a Web directory is categorized by different topics, such as business, health, or sports, which are broken into sub-topics. Most directories have a search engine that allows you to search within the directory.

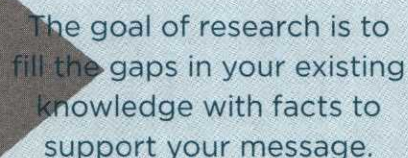
Many libraries offer their catalogs and periodical indexes online. However, they usually offer only brief descriptions of available items, not the full text. Searching a library's online catalog and periodical index may tell you if the library has information on your topic, but you still have to go in person to the library to access that information.

## THE LIBRARY

A good library offers more information than you'll find on the Internet. University libraries are the best, but public libraries also are good resources. You'll find books, magazines, newspapers, videos, DVDs, audio tapes, and other items. You can search the library's catalog and periodical indexes for the latest books and articles on your topic.

The best part of library research is that people are available to help you. The reference librarian can recommend periodicals, direct you to books on the subject, and even help you search for information on the Internet. In some libraries the reference librarian will do the research for you for a small fee.

Whether you are searching the Internet or visiting your local library, you'll be sure to find helpful links or references to other documents on your topic.



The goal of research is to fill the gaps in your existing knowledge with facts to support your message.

## OTHER INFORMATION SOURCES

The Internet and the library are the most common sources of information, but they may not be necessary for some types of research. If you're looking for information about the number of new businesses in your community, call the local chamber of commerce. Looking for tips on growing roses? The staff at a nearby garden store may be able to help. Do you have some questions about etiquette? A bookstore will have lots of material on the subject. What do people in your neighborhood think about the town's redevelopment plans? Ask them, or read the letters and editorial pages in your newspaper.

As you do the research, remember to:

1. Keep an open mind. The information you discover may cause you to change your mind about a topic or prove it to be inappropriate or incorrect.
2. Use different sources. Read as many different books or articles about the subject as possible to give you a broader view.
3. Record the information. Take notes on important points and the publication in which you found it, in case you want to cite it, are asked about it later, or want to check it again.

## VARY THE SUPPORT

Most likely you will collect far more information than you need. Your challenge is to pick out the material that best supports your ideas. It should add color to your presentation, explaining or reinforcing points, and illustrating your message.

Keep your speech interesting by using different types of support materials. Citing statistics may be appropriate for one point, but a story or anecdote may be the best support for another. Avoid using the same type of support material throughout the speech. Excessive use of statistics can be dull; too many anecdotes will make them lose their effectiveness.

## KEEP IT AT THEIR LEVEL

Research can be impressive, but only if your audience understands it. If your support material is complex or involves statistics, find the human interest side and include that information in your speech. For example, if your research shows that 20 percent of adults read at a fifth-grade level or lower, make this statistic more meaningful to your audience by saying, "One of five adults in this room reads at or below the fifth-grade level." When you relate numbers or facts to their everyday lives, your listeners will be appreciative.

## YOUR ASSIGNMENT

This project emphasizes using research to support your message.

- ▶ Choose a subject that will interest your listeners, one that requires a large amount of research.
- ▶ Collect information from numerous sources. This will be the most thoroughly researched presentation you have given to date.
- ▶ Carefully support your points and opinions with specific facts, examples, and illustrations.

Be sure to incorporate what you learned in previous projects about purpose, organization, word usage, body language, and vocal variety and use appropriate suggestions from the evaluations you received. As you prepare, review the Speaker's Checklist in Project 1.

## EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **RESEARCH YOUR TOPIC**

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Note to the Evaluator:** The speaker is to select a subject of importance to the audience that requires a large amount of research. The speaker is to collect information from numerous sources and carefully support points with specific facts, examples, and illustrations, rather than with just the speaker's own opinions. The speaker is to incorporate what he or she has learned in previous projects about purpose, organization, word usage, body language, and vocal variety, as well as use appropriate suggestions from the evaluations received. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please write answers to the questions below.

- ▶ How well did the speaker's topic apply to the audience?
  
- ▶ Was the topic well researched?
  
- ▶ How well did the speaker support his or her main points?
  
- ▶ Was the support material appropriate for the point made?
  
- ▶ Did the speaker vary the types of support material?
  
- ▶ How clear was the speaker's purpose?
  
- ▶ Was the speech effectively organized?
  
- ▶ Did the speaker take advantage of body language and vocal variety?
  
- ▶ What could the speaker have done differently to improve the speech?