

# Richard Payne's ten top tips for using your voice effectively

1. When presenting or teaching stand up to speak if possible. This will ensure the muscles involved in the breathing process are not constricted. It will also make you look more confident.
  2. Try to remember the POP principal before you start:  
**Posture** - stand upright and avoid slouching.  
**Orientation** - always face the audience when you are speaking. If you need to turn away to a screen to point out something, simply stop speaking.  
**Proxemics** - stand as close as possible to your audience, as this will reduce the amount of physical effort necessary. However, you should never stand nearer than arm's length to those sitting in the front row.
  3. When giving a presentation or teaching you need to speak more slowly than when conversing. Your audience need time to take in what you are saying. As a guide, you should aim to pace yourself at between 120-140 words per minute.
  4. **Breath is the fuel for speech. Start each phrase on a full breath and as soon as you feel you are running out, stop speaking and take another breath to get you to the end of the sentence. Do not be frightened to pause. Pauses are your opportunity to refuel!**
  5. Try not to push the voice out with your throat. Let the breath do the work. This will ensure that you do not cause the vocal mechanism undue strain and stress.
  6. Try to ensure when you start speaking that your voice is vital and alive, as this will motivate the audience to listen.
  7. One of the quickest and easiest things to do to brighten up a dull voice is to emphasise one word in each phrase. This is what newsreaders do, and it is a very effective technique in bringing the spoken word to life.
  8. **Ensure that you articulate clearly, paying particular attention to consonant sounds when they appear on the end of a word. Clarity of speech is important if you are trying to project your voice to a large audience, and when you are using a microphone.**
  9. Open your mouth a little wider for public speaking than you normally would for conversational speech. As a guide you should open your mouth about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch when producing vowels (which are uninterrupted sounds carried on the breath stream).
  10. If you are speaking for longer than 10-15 minutes without a break take small, frequent sips of water to ensure your throat and mouth do not become dry. Avoid carbonated water, as this can cause you to burp in the middle of your presentation!
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