

# LACC Brown Bag Effective Communication Skills



## Would you believe that....

....political experts now agree that most successful candidates are elected not on the basis of *what* they say, but *how* they say it?

Ten outstanding speaking voices chosen by 100 speech and communication experts, are those of Sean Connery, James Earl Jones, Oprah Winfrey, Diane Sawyer, Whoopi Goldberg, Denzel Washington, George Clooney, Julie Roberts, Russell Crowe, and Senator Joseph Lieberman?

...The 10 most persuasive words in English, according to a Harvard study, are *you, money, free, easy, love, save, new, guarantee, health, sex?*

...The average man speaks 30,000 words a day? The average woman speaks 60,000. The average novel contains 70,000.

...you don't have to yell to lose your voice? Whispering also strains the voice. And if you're a telephone addict and have a tendency to cradle the phone between your shoulder and neck as you're talking, you can easily strain your voice?

## Elements of an effective speaking voice:

- **Pleasant Quality**—examples of undesirable vocal qualities can be described as breathy, harsh, hypernasal, hyponasal, and hoarse. An excellent voice has a pleasing quality.
- **Clear Articulation**—involves movements of the lips, jaws, tongue and soft palate to form, separate, and join individual speech sounds. A quality voice is distinct, intelligible and easy to understand.
- **Appropriate Loudness**—this refers to appropriate sound level, volume and projection. An outstanding voice is easily heard.
- **Expressiveness**—refers to pitch level, vocal variety and rate. An effective voice is animated, expressive and at the appropriate rate and pitch.

*Good speech doesn't attract undue attention to itself.*

## Some public speaking tips:

Stand up straight  
Project your voice  
Eye contact connects you with your audience  
Know your material well  
Try and avoid fillers (e.g., *like, uh, um, ya know*)

A University of California researcher has determined that approximately 7 percent of any message is communicated with words, but almost 40 percent of any message is communicated by the voice—*the way we sound.*

Practice Exercises for:

- **Pleasant Quality**—being relaxed and reducing unnecessary tension increases vocal quality.

1. *The transformation exercise: stand with your feet apart, and beginning with the toes, tense and tighten the muscles. Work your way up through your legs, hips, abdomen, chest, shoulders, arms, then your face and head, all the way through your scalp. Hold the statue posture for 5 to 10 seconds and release. Repeat 3-4 times.*

2. *In the following, the first word in each pair has more “relaxed” sounds. The second word has more “tense” sounds. As you do these, try to carry over the relaxation that you had on the first word into the second.*

<b>awl-eel</b>	<b>call-keel</b>	<b>hop-heap</b>	<b>con-keen</b>
<b>bond-band</b>	<b>roughed-raft</b>	<b>sup-sap</b>	<b>swatch-switch</b>
<b>Smock-smack</b>	<b>bird-beard</b>	<b>Paul-peel</b>	<b>top-tape</b>

- **Clear Articulation**—moving the lips, jaw, tongue, soft palate and other articulators with precision

1. *Lips:*

- Too-tee-too-tee-too-tee-too-tee*
- Television has proved that people will look at anything rather than each other.*
- “Whistling with the Wind” was one of Walt Weber’s wildly popular winners.*
- Tom, the tubby tuba tooter, told Tim to time out to travel to Toronto.*

2. *Jaw*

- Goo-gaw-goo-gaw-goo-gaw-goo-gaw-goo-gaw*
- Cars and bars mean stars and scars*
- Laws, like the spider’s web, catch the flies and let the hawks go.*
- Doctors are busy playing God when so few of them have the qualifications and, besides, the job is already taken.*

3. *Tongue*

- Bead-bad-bird-bud-boom-boom*
- Be advised: Training your child is always a matter of pot luck.*
- If you want to get fat, don’t eat fast. If you want to get thin, don’t eat....fast.*
- Nowadays early to bed and early to rise probably means that the television set isn’t working.*

4. *Soft Palate*

- Aw-m-aw-m-aw-m-aw-m-aw-m-aw-m*
- Half of being smart is knowing what you’re dumb at.*
- There are two kinds of folks singers: Those who can sing and don’t and those who can’t sing and do.*
- Only one person in two billion will live to be 116 or older*

Gargling is one of the worst things you can do for a sore throat, according to studies by throat specialists at the University of California. Throat-clearing doesn’t help matters either. Instead, try drinking lots of water to keep throat tissues moist.

Helena Modjeska, a great Polish actress, was once asked quite unexpectedly at a dinner party to do one of her favorite scenes from Shakespeare. She performed in Polish for about 10 minutes before an English-speaking audience. Her performance was so emotional that she had her listeners in tears. Later she confessed that she had merely recited the Polish alphabet over and over again!

**Appropriate Loudness**—refers to the intensity of sound vibrations and energy exerted on the vocal folds. Professors, coaches, singers and other professionals who use their voice on a daily basis for their work can suffer from strain from overuse or inappropriate loudness. Consider the nature of the material, room size, acoustics, audience size and proximity.

1. Begin "ah" softly, and then increase it to your loudest tone of good quality. Hold the tone for a few seconds, and then decrease it to your softest tone of good quality. Repeat several times, keeping the pitch constant.
2. Four columns of words appear below. Read across the columns. Say the same four words in one breath. Read the words in the first column (in italics) softly, in the second column (regular print) medium loudly, in the third column (underlined) loudly, and in the fourth column (capitals) very loudly:

<i>hey</i>	hey	<u>hey</u>	HEY
<i>no</i>	no	<u>no</u>	NO
<i>sit</i>	sit	<u>sit</u>	SIT
<i>leave</i>	leave	<u>leave</u>	LEAVE
<i>out</i>	out	<u>out</u>	OUT

- **Expressiveness**—using vocal variety such as pitch changes, rate and pausing to engage the listener.

500 college students were asked to evaluate their professors on the basis of teaching effectiveness.

General Rating of Instructors

Superior, excellent, good

Fair, inferior

Reasons or Comments

Enthusiastic delivery, alive, alert, vocally animated, dynamic  
Way of talking, has warmth and rapport, vivid, positive

Monotone, drones and chants, bored, wooden, burned out

1. Say these phrases:  
What is this thing called love?  
What? Is this thing called love?  
What is this thing called? Love?
2. Read each of these one-liners twice. In your first reading, ignore the obvious emotional nature of the material. Deliberately give a flat, cold reading. In your second reading, respond with as much sincerity and animation as possible.
  - a. I'm frightened.
  - b. Am I happy!
  - c. She's dead! You're sure?
  - d. I hate him.
  - e. I'm sad.
  - f. I'm suspicious of her.
  - g. Get out of here.
  - h. You're the murderer
  - i. That's disgusting

## HELPFUL HINTS FOR A HEALTHY VOICE

- Drink at least eight 12 oz. bottles of water a day
- Avoid excessive or frequent throat clearing. Try sipping water instead.
- Frequent throat-clearing or coughing can be injurious to the vocal cords.
- Excessive cough, mucus production, or throat clearing may be an indication of an underlying disorder such as Laryngopharyngeal Reflux (LPR).
- Get plenty of sleep. Fatigue can cause the voice to sound hoarse.
- Use plenty of breath support. Your diaphragm and lungs form the generator of the voice. Take advantage of them.
- Do not speak in sentences that are too long. This causes you to vocalize with inadequate breath support at the end of your air stream. Shorter sentences, with a deep breath in between, optimizes breath support.
- Minimize caffeine, alcohol and dairy intake. These can dry out the vocal cords and/or create thick mucous.
- Avoid menthol throat lozenges. These can dry the throat.
- Avoid smoking, people who smoke, and noxious fumes. These are irritating and damaging to the vocal cords.
- Be aware of background noise. Raising your voice above others in a loud environment can cause straining and vocal abuse.
- Watch your vocal volume and posture of head/neck while on the telephone. This can cause uneven pressure and strain on the vocal cords.
- If it seems speaking takes extra effort, you have throat discomfort or pain after using your voice, experience vocal fatigue or experience "cracking" of the voice, ... consult with a speech-language pathologist.



Speech Courses at LACC related to improving voice and speech skills:

**Speech 61—Speech Clinic (1 unit)** This course provides students with individualized training with American English pronunciation, improving receptive/expressive language skills and other speech communication objectives

**Speech 101—Oral Communication (3 units)** This course gives students techniques and practice in delivering informative, and persuasive extemporaneous public speaking.

**Speech 111—Voice & Articulation (3 units)** This course focuses on methods of voice development, speech sound production, articulation, pronunciation and vocal hygiene.

**Speech 113—English Speech as a Second Language (3 units)** This is a course specifically for American English language learners who have adequate reading and grammar skills but need additional help with articulation and pronunciation.

For more information regarding effective communication and/or communication disorders you can email Sharon Hendricks at [hendris1@lacitycollege.edu](mailto:hendris1@lacitycollege.edu) and also search the American Speech-Language Association website at [asha.org](http://asha.org)

