

Vocal Hygiene for Teachers

As a teacher, your voice is vital. If you consistently have poor vocal quality (e.g., hoarseness), you “lose your voice” often, or it is difficult or painful to speak, you may develop nodules (growths on the vocal cords) if the problem persists. Please see your physician. He/she may refer you to a speech-language pathologist and/or an ear, nose and throat specialist.

To prevent voice problems:

- **Avoid yelling.**
 - Use non-verbal actions (clap, bang a drum, turn the lights off and on, blow a whistle) to get class attention.
 - Use an amplification system.
 - Maintain good posture to improve voice projection.
 - Prior to speaking, ensure you have the students’ attention, reduce background noise as much as possible and position yourself as close to the students as possible.
- When singing or speaking, concentrate on **good breath support**:
 - If you run out of air, don’t try to force yourself to sing or speak -- take more frequent breaths (i.e., pausing).
- When singing, sing in a range that is **comfortable** for you.
- Speak softly rather than whispering (whispering tends to be forced and can do harm).
- Keep your throat and environment **moist**.
 - Keep a bottle of water at your desk and drink often.
 - Use a humidifier or bowl of water on the radiator if the classroom is dry.
- **Avoid clearing your throat** too often.
 - Try swallowing, pausing or taking a deep breath. If you have to clear it, do so gently.
- Keep your neck and jaw as **relaxed** as possible, especially when you speak.
 - Check that you are not clenching your teeth (they should be slightly apart when at rest).
 - Attempt to eliminate muscular tension in the neck.
 - Keep your head erect. When you speak the larynx rises and if you bend your head down, you will restrict this natural movement and interfere with proper breathing.
- **Rest your voice** as well as your body when you are ill or tired.
- Limit your intake of caffeinated beverages, reduce or **quit smoking** and avoid smoke-filled environments.