

THE VOCAL SKILLS POCKETBOOK

By Richard Payne

Drawings by Phil Hailstone

“I enjoyed reading this little book and would recommend it to anyone who has to give a presentation, lecture, lesson or training session. It contains a wealth of useful guidance and practical exercises to help improve vocal technique and will be an invaluable resource both for novice and experienced presenters alike.”

Penny Hatton, Director of Staff & Departmental Development, University of Leeds

“These powerful tips and techniques will be of great benefit to anyone who wants to make the most of their voice when pitching, presenting or generally trying to communicate effectively with clients.”

Peter Batchelor, Head of Direct Marketing, Triangle Communications

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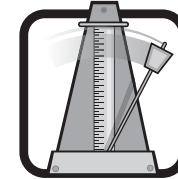
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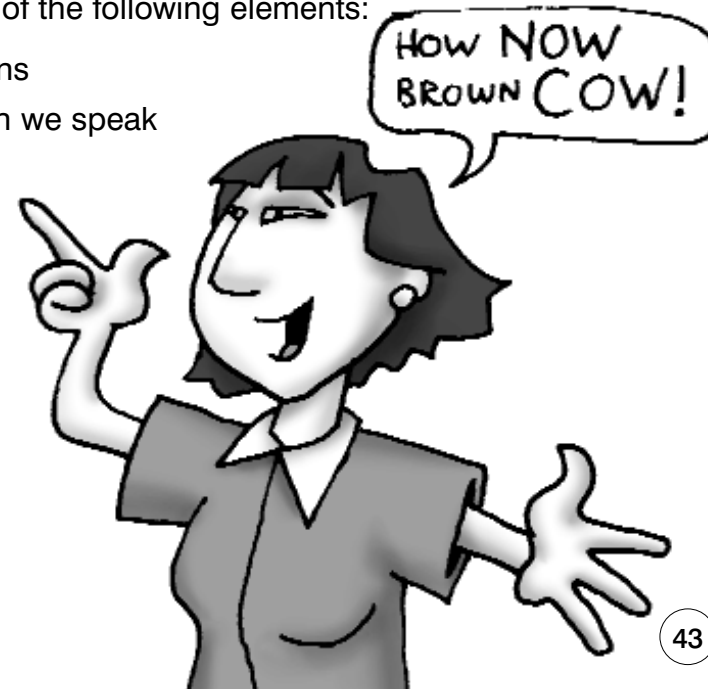
VARIETY IN SPEECH

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS



A voice with variety contains a combination of the following elements:

- **Pitch** – a variety of notes and intonations
- **Appropriate pace** – the speed at which we speak
- **Pauses** – these break up our speech and can assist in the process of providing an interesting sound. Pauses provide rhythm to our delivery
- **Volume** – a variety of volume levels helps to create an atmosphere
- **Word emphasis** – emphasizing words can be a powerful way of instilling energy into the delivery



VARIETY IN SPEECH

YOUR AIM



Work on **one** of these essential elements at a time.

Do not attempt too much otherwise it will be overwhelming.

Remember!

- You will already be using a lot of these techniques in your conversational speech
- For presenting/teaching, some of these techniques need to be enlarged or exaggerated
- It is quite natural to feel a little self-conscious at first when you are trying out these new approaches
- Persevere: constant practice is the only way to improve!

VARIETY IN SPEECH

PITCH



Pitch is the note or notes which we use when we speak. The human speaking voice has a range of between 5-8 available notes.

The pitch range is the difference between our lowest and our highest note:

- The male pitch range is generally lower than the female pitch range
- Our modal pitch is the term used to describe the habitual note we strike
- Some people strike a note and do not move from that note, which results in monotonous speech

Exercise 9

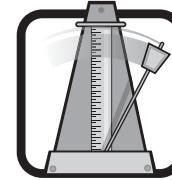
Say the following statement aloud:
My father's bought a new car.

Now repeat as a question:
My father's bought a new car?

This demonstrates the pitch changes you produce when making a statement compared to asking a question.

VARIETY IN SPEECH

PITCH RANGE



The reason for the difference in pitch range is connected with gender. A man's vocal cords are approximately 30mm long, while a woman's vocal cords are approximately 20mm long. The man's longer vocal cords vibrate slower and give a deeper voice.

When the vocal cords are wide open they vibrate slowly, creating a low pitch sound.

When the vocal cords are close together, they vibrate rapidly to create a high pitch sound.

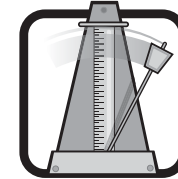
When we speak we rarely make a step change from one pitch to another. It is more normal to glide momentarily into a note slightly above or slightly below our starting note and then to return to that starting note.

Problems can arise when your starting note is in your upper range, as it can make the voice seem thin and reedy or give a frivolous quality to what you say.

Pitch glides can occur anywhere in a tone unit, but for formal speech it is best to restrict **major** pitch glides to the start of a tone unit or the end.


VARIETY IN SPEECH

INTONATION




Pitch is sometimes referred to as intonation. Here are four of the most common intonation sounds:

- **Long fall** which suggests finality, confidence – when you wish to say something and have no intention of adding to it and you do not expect a response, eg:

'I think the sun's coming  *out'*

- **Short fall** which suggests abrupt termination. You may give the impression you are busy or do not wish to be bothered, eg:

Request: 'Can you finish this work before leaving tonight?'

Reply:  'Yes'

Key



Long fall




Short fall

VARIETY IN SPEECH

INTONATION



- **Long rise** which suggests a desire for a reply. This is typically used when asking for a *yes* or *no* response, ie a question which does not begin with the words *who*, *where*, *when*, *what*, *how*, *why*. Eg:

'This is a  test?'

- **Short rise** – used, for example, when trying to attract someone's attention or when replying if someone tries to get our attention:

Question: 'Fred?'

Reply:  'Yes'

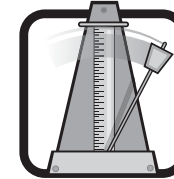
Key	
 Long rise	 Short rise

Some conventional uses of pitch:

- The readers of classified football results in the United Kingdom use changes in pitch/intonation to indicate the score
- Newsreaders will often change the pitch at the onset of a new story

VARIETY IN SPEECH

PITCH AND MOOD



Pitch can also indicate mood.

For example:

- A sustained period of speech in a *high pitch* can indicate sarcasm, lightheartedness or tension
- A sustained period of speech in a *lower pitch* indicates seriousness and gravity

Note how newsreaders will use a higher pitch for the more humorous stories and a lower pitch for more serious stories.



About the Author

Richard Payne BA (Hons), MITOL, PgDip, Cert. Ed.

Richard is an experienced and popular voice tutor who has worked with: individuals, teachers, lecturers, professionals and business people. He is also Managing Director of BSPS Training Consultancy Limited and a regular contributor of articles to various journals and publications. Richard is a Member of Equity, and The Institute of Training and Occupational Learning and an Associate of The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Richard's combination of pragmatic advice and accelerated learning techniques has helped thousands of people to make the most of their voice when presenting or teaching.



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