

Conscious Control of Rate and Articulation

“Speak slower!”

Marvelous advice, and most of us pay as much attention to it as we do to “Drive carefully!” If you’re told to slow down while talking, what you probably do is put longer pauses *between* words and phrases. (Try producing a loud pause and see what comes out.)

As far as loudness is concerned, what “Speak slower!” really means is slowing down *on* the words. Point up your vowels and diphthongs by ha-a-a-ang-ing onto and stre-e-e-etching them. They are the sounds that cut through.

Say *Stop*. You can make a lot more of the right kind of noise on the *o* than you can on the *st-p*. Try it.

Sufficient Energy and Animation

The tricky problems of personality and lifestyle enter the scene once more. You met Lisa and Mike a couple of pages ago. Shy, bashful individuals, however, aren’t always the only ones unable to make themselves heard. Vocal laziness, not to mention indifference, hinders good projection. Another complication. The minute vocally lazy persons are urged to speak loudly enough, they protest: “But I’m screaming!” But *to their hearers*, they’re not screaming.

If your emotional and physical health is good, you’ll have excellent projection if you speak with more force and energy. Your entire body must respond! A well-projected voice doesn’t merely reach its hearers, it penetrates them. Research indicates that strong, dominant personalities tend to have more forceful and energetic voices. Passive personalities apparently are more slack-voiced.

Animation and power are there for the asking if you have something to say, a purpose in saying it and, above all, a strong desire to say it.

During Jesse Jackson’s fiery address to a Democratic National Convention, people wept. One South Carolina delegate fought back the tears and said, “If you want him to or not, that man reaches you. He’s mesmerizing!”

A reporter for *The New York Times* asked the Reverend Jackson how he did it. Jackson replied, “I communicate passion, and I touch people’s souls.”

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, WHERE YOU'RE SAYING IT, AND THE SIZE OF YOUR AUDIENCE

Nature of Material Being Presented

Material that expresses relatively strong and forceful emotions or ideas (happiness, elation, rage, anger, conviction) is often more effective if relatively loud levels are used. Material that expresses sadness, despair, profundity, moodiness, or sincerity is frequently more effective if relatively quiet levels are used.

What level of loudness would you use for:

- *Once upon a midnight dreary, as I pondered weak and weary.*
- *Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!*

Room or Area: Size and Acoustics

When a room is packed with people, furniture, and heavy drapes, loudness has to be increased because these items absorb sound waves.

For the right tonal impact, voices must compete with the cubic footage of the performing space, not to mention all surrounding noises—and win!

Speaking to an audience in an auditorium that seats two thousand or to a few friends in a small living room are two entirely different situations. Everybody knows that. Yet some speakers who find themselves in an unfamiliar room or area make no effort to adjust their volume, and without the aid of a mike, they can’t be heard. Rather than laziness, their problem is a lack of experience or an inability to adapt to circumstances.

Audience Size and Proximity (Nearness)

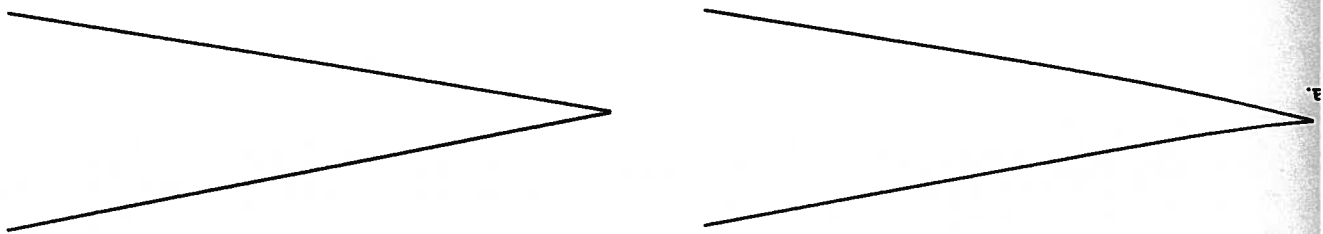
You shouldn't have to turn up your volume in a Coke, coffee, or Coors conversation with three friends in a booth to the same extent that you do if you're talking to thirty or three hundred people in a large hall. The nearness of the audience is also important. To a partner five feet away, you can pitch a baseball with a mere flick of the wrist. If the partner is standing fifty feet away, more energy and strength are required. Everyone should be capable of audible speech without electronic amplification. There are obvious exceptions. If you're addressing the Republican National Convention, you'll have to use amplification. But remember that Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address, and Christ, the Sermon on the Mount, without the aid of mikes and speakers. And, contrary to certain popular religious paintings, Christ delivered the sermon from a *sitting position!*

LEVELS OF LOUDNESS

In some of these exercises, we'll experiment with three levels of loudness:

- Soft (avoid whispering)
- Medium loud
- Loud

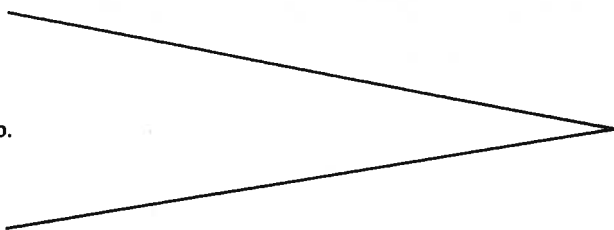
1. As a sergeant in charge of a firing squad, you're about to give the commands *Ready! Aim! Fire!* three times. The first time, you're standing next to your squad. The first level of loudness will work. The second time, you're standing about ten yards from your squad. Second level of loudness. The third time, you're standing about twenty yards away. Third level. As you give the commands three times, don't try to control the pitch levels, and on the third one, let the sound "blast." As a result of this negative practice (*and don't try it more than once!*), you'll certainly feel or hear several things: a "leaping larynx," which means an upward swoop in pitch, a strangled and strident vocal quality on level three, and a possible slight irritation in your throat. All of these are highly undesirable elements in achieving loudness.
2. 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. Try it at the three levels of loudness.
3. Musicians are concerned with signs and symbols as well as notes. The sign < indicates a gradual increase in loudness or intensity (a crescendo). The sign > indicates a gradual decrease in loudness or intensity (a decrescendo). As you practice:
 - Keep your pitch level constant.
 - Avoid tightening your throat.
 - Think of the support coming from the muscles of breathing.



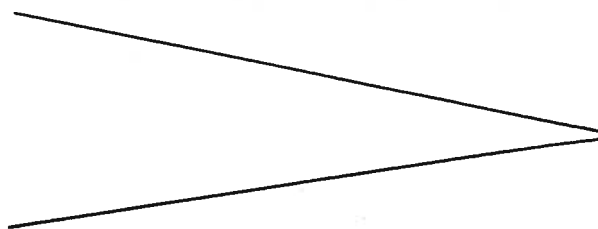
STEP OUT OF THE CAR, PLEASE!

HOW MANY TIMES MUST I TELL YOU?

b.

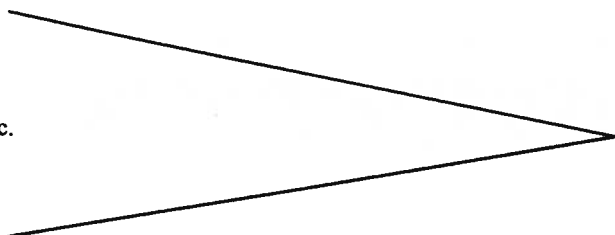


YOU DON'T MEAN THAT!

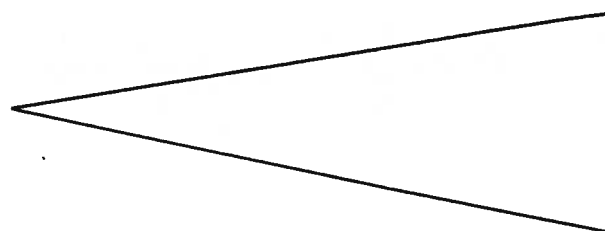


DON'T CALL US; WE'LL CALL YOU

c.

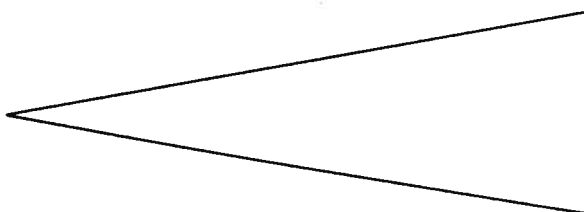


YOU WON'T GET BY WITH THIS.



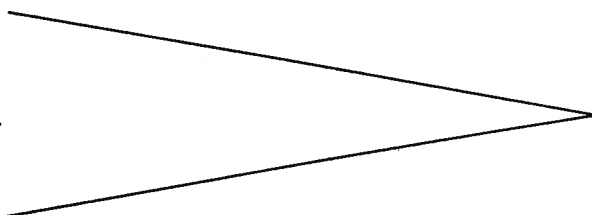
DON'T EVER SPEAK TO ME AGAIN!

d.



one OF US HAS TO GO.

e.



NOW on the other hand

hey	no	sit	leave	out	die	ho
hey	no	sit	leave	out	die	ho
hey	no	sit	leave	out	die	ho
hey	no	sit	leave	out	die	ho
hey	no	sit	leave	out	die	ho
hey	no	sit	leave	out	die	ho
hey	no	sit	leave	out	die	ho
hey	no	sit	leave	out	die	ho
hey	no	sit	leave	out	die	ho
hey	no	sit	leave	out	die	ho

Below are four columns of words. Read across the columns. Say the same four words on one breath. Read the words in the first column (in italics) softly, in the second column (regular print) medium loudly, in the third column (small capitals) loudly, and in the fourth column (capitals) very loudly.

5. A little bodily activity will help you. Make fists, and as you say the word, punch out straight ahead of you. The louder the word, the bigger your punch. Sound silly? Of course it does. But it works. Try it.

VERY LOUD
LOUD
medium loud
soft

Exercises 5-7 coming up.

Staying in? If you've been reasonably comfortable with Exercises 1-4, you might be ready for a little change. Keep this uppermost in mind: Loudness is a *relative* term.

As a little switch, let's go for four levels of loudness.

4. In reading each of these commands at the three levels of loudness, inhale deeply and quickly. Give them some clout. Say them briskly, but keep the throat as relaxed as possible. Notice the sudden contraction of your abdominal muscles as you project the phrases.

a. Bug off!
b. Hands up!
c. Company, halt!

d. Eyes right!
e. All aboard!
f. On the double!

g. Order arms!
h. Get lost!
i. Play ball!

jet

SET

GO!

TURN Around, please!

PLEASE

SIT

here.

I

GIVE

UP.

6. Drill with these short sentences. The instructions in parentheses preceding each sentence in section *a* suggest a loudness level.

- a. **(Telephone conversation: quiet)** I'll see you in five minutes.
(Casual, face-to-face) That prof's a rough grader.
(Vigorous) You know better than that!
(Belt it out!) I refuse to listen to you!

As you read these sentences, repeat the pattern suggested in *a*:

- b. I have no idea where she is.
Let's go on a picnic tonight.
He always cheats in tests.
I've never been so mad.
- c. Sorry, but I'm busy tonight.
Sorry, but I'm busy tonight.
Sorry, but I'm busy tonight.
Sorry, but I'm busy tonight.
- d. I haven't seen you in months.
Why is that card up your sleeve?
I don't care what you think.
I don't care what anyone thinks.
- e. Do you know what I saw today?
They used to go together.
There's a serial killer loose on this campus!
Don't bother me. Let me alone!
- f. I don't watch TV any more.
I heard that she was seriously ill.
Politics? Yuch! This country's a mess!
I'll never wait for you again.
- g. I'm getting a new roommate.
Isn't the food around here terrible?
You've said that a hundred times.
Listen to me: We're all through!
- h. I'm going to level with you.
What can I do about it?
Go away!
He's got a gun!
- i. Why are you staring at me like that?
Why are you staring at me like that?
Why are you staring at me like that?
Why are you staring at me like that?
- j. Honey, wake up, there's a burglar in the basement.
I don't want to tell you again.
It's all over. You're under arrest!
I smell smoke. Let's get out of here!
- k. Do you hear something ticking in that case?
Come along. The boys downtown want to talk to you.
What do you mean—you lost it?
If it's the last thing I ever do, I'll get you for this!
- l. There's something you ought to know.
Don't move until I tell you to.
You're the last person in the world I'd suspect.
Don't touch! It's a live wire!

PROJECTION

- m. What's that scratching at the door?
Whatever it is—don't open that door!
I'm not afraid of anything. I'm opening the door!
- n. He-e-elp!
We can't go on like this.
We can't go on like this.
We can't go on like this.
We can't go on like this.

The term *projection* has already been used. Obviously, it has something to do with loudness, but because it also has a rather special meaning, it is given some extra consideration.

A bride tosses her bouquet. Customarily, she throws it in the general direction of the bridesmaids, not necessarily at a specific woman. A baseball pitcher throws a ball, but aims it in the direction of a specific individual—the catcher.

If you speak loudly, you are in a sense "tossing" your voice in a general direction and over a general area with sufficient strength and power so that most of those present can hear and understand what you're saying. If you're projecting your voice, you're beaming it to a particular individual or group or to a rather specific area. *Projection is controlled energy that gives impact and intelligibility to sound. It involves a deliberate concentration and a strong desire to communicate with your listeners.*

To reemphasize: Athletic, crisp articulation is essential for a bright, thrusting tone and lean, clarion projection. Directors and actors use the word *project* constantly. We've all attended amateur and professional plays and complained that we couldn't hear some of the actors. Their loudness may have been adequate—maybe they were even shouting—but their voices only reached, rather than penetrated us. Yet the actor who knows how to project rather than merely speak loudly can be understood easily even when speaking *sotto voce*—in a low, soft voice. A former student is now a district attorney in a large city. He's required to speak in a courtroom almost every day—without a mike. Says he, "I refuse to scream, but I do use my voice as a weapon. I've found that the more aggressively I project and beam my voice at the judge and jury, the more convictions I get."

Vitalize Your Vowels, Dust Off Your Diphthongs

Earlier in the chapter you were advised to *point up* your vowels and diphthongs by stre-e-e-etching them. They are the sounds that carry and project.

7. Say the following as vigorously as possible. This is an artificial device, but the dashes will remind you to le-e-ngthen and pro-olo-ong your vowels and diphthongs. Exaggerate.

- When i-in dou-ubt, do-on't.
- On-out, da-armed spo-ot, ou-out, I say-ay!
- Show-owing u-up i-is ni-nety per-ce-ent o-of li-life.
- Even the-e be-est fa-amily tree-ee ha-as i-its sa-ap.
- When I-Irish e-eyes a-are smi-iling, wa-at-atch yo-our ste-ep.
- If you-ou ca-an la-augh a-at i-it, you-ou ca-an li-ive wi-ith i-it.
- Go-ol-d! Go-ol-d! Bri-ight a-and ye-ello-w-ow, ha-ard a-and co-ol-d!
- Loo-ook too-oo this-is day-ay! Fo-or i-it i-is the ve-ery wa-day o-of li-life!
- May-ay the de-evil cha-ase you-ou e-every day-ay o-of yo-our li-life a-and ne-ever ca-at-atch you-ou.

Repeat *without exaggerating*, but make your vowels and diphthongs spirited and springy. Be sure that they carry.