



UNIT 2

Building Your Acting Skills

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CHAPTER 5

Developing Your Voice



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Spotlight on Terms



- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| ♦ accent | ♦ pitch |
| ♦ articulation | ♦ poise |
| ♦ breath control | ♦ posture |
| ♦ breathing | ♦ projection |
| ♦ dialect | ♦ pronunciation |
| ♦ diaphragm | ♦ quality |
| ♦ diction | ♦ rate |
| ♦ flexibility | ♦ relaxation |
| ♦ inflection | ♦ vocal folds |
| ♦ oscilloscope | ♦ volume |

T

he lines that an actor speaks must be heard clearly. Every word must be understood by cast members and audience alike. Thus, the voice is the foundation of an actor's art. Effective vocal communication is important not only onstage, but also at home, in the classroom—wherever you want people to understand what you are saying.

A voice that is used effectively conveys a wide range of emotions and reflects a person's personality, moods, and attitudes. A well-trained actor with an effective voice knows the importance of the following ten elements: relaxation, breathing, quality, pitch, flexibility, articulation, pronunciation, volume, rate, and projection.

If you were fortunate when you were younger, someone encouraged you to develop good speech habits. If this happened, you will probably have more success in theatre class than those who need to change bad vocal habits. Unfortunately, most people fall into the category of those who need vocal improvement. Take a moment now to list in your journal what you like about your voice and what you think needs improving. In this chapter, you will learn about the elements that make up an effective voice. You will also put a plan into action with drills, exercises, and activities to develop and improve your voice.

“

Know you how much the people may be moved by that which he will utter?

William Shakespeare

”



Relaxation and Breathing

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Define relaxation and breathing.
- ◆ Understand the function and importance of relaxation and breathing.
- ◆ Participate in drills, exercises, and activities for developing and improving relaxation and breathing techniques.

Warm Up



Which method helps you relax?

- a. music
- b. silence in a room
- c. daydreaming
- d. exercises
- e. all of the above

In your journal, explain your answer.

relaxation

freedom from all bodily tensions.

posture

how we sit and stand.

Relaxation

Before using your voice onstage, you must prepare your body by becoming relaxed. Most people do not know how to completely relax. **Relaxation** means freedom from all bodily tensions. It gives the actor a deeper level of awareness and provides the energy needed for the stage.

Being relaxed does not mean having a body like a wet noodle. The body and mind must be keenly alert and ready, yet calm and free from distractions and tension. Relaxation requires that you shut out any wandering thoughts about yourself or others. It also means ignoring unusual sounds, interruptions, and any other distractions. You can train both your mind and body to reach this level of relaxation with the exercises provided in this lesson.

Relaxation will give you physical and mental control and focus onstage, which in turn will help you achieve your theatrical goals. Relaxation techniques will also improve your **posture** (how you sit and stand), which is essential in controlled breathing. Finally, relaxation

For the best possible performance, you need to be relaxed. Actors use a variety of relaxation exercises to prepare for their performances.



will improve the sound of your voice and make your movement smoother onstage.

ACTION

- 1. Musical Relaxation.** While listening to music, lie on your back on the classroom floor. Relax each portion of your body by picturing the muscles with your mind's eye. See them relaxing as you breath slowly and deeply. Start with the top of your head and move down to your toes.
- 2. Away With Tension!** Listen to music provided by your teacher and experience the difference between tension and relaxation. Start with the top of your head and move down to your toes. Tighten up the muscles and then completely relax. Concentrate on each section of your body by seeing the muscles in your mind's eye change from bright red to soft pink as they relax. End up completely relaxed, and remain that way for 5 minutes.
- 3. Space Walk.** While standing in the classroom (find your own space to perform without bumping or disrupting other students), pretend that you are in space. Move completely relaxed, as if you were floating. Explore the feeling of complete freedom but with the control of slow motion.
- 4. Silence is Golden!** During complete silence, sit at your desk for 3 minutes. Relax your entire body. Sit upright, but roll your head down and let your hands dangle by your body. In your mind's eye, see your body completely relaxed during these 3 minutes without interruptions.
- 5. Body Parts in Motion.** While listening to music, do the following relaxation exercises three times each: shoulder shrugs; shoulder rolls

forward and backward; head rolls forward and backward; arm swings forward and backward; waist stretches to the left and right; massage your neck and shoulders; leg swings one at a time to the sides, forward, and backward; foot stretches up and down; massage your feet and hands.

6. **Smile!** Smile in an exaggerated manner several times to stretch and relax your face muscles. Repeat this activity, using a frown instead of a smile.
7. **Facial Massage!** Massage your face, and completely relax your facial muscles.
8. **Sleepy Time!** Yawn several times to relax the jaw.
9. **Going Up, Going Down!** Sit on the floor of the classroom and get comfortable. Pretend that you are in an elevator. Start at the twentieth floor and slowly go down. There will be pauses at each floor, but you will not get off. Finally, at the first floor, pretend to get off in a completely relaxed state of mind and body. As the leader calls out the different floors, feel your body get more relaxed at each floor as you go down.
10. **Country Time!** Stand in the classroom (find your own space). Raise your arms up and reach high into the air. Stretch higher and higher. Bend over and relax your body as if it were a limp doll. Remain in this position, and let your arms dangle for 1 minute. Slowly come up, relaxing each part of your body as you rebuild your backbone while gradually straightening up. As you completely stand erect, pretend that you are alone in the country, standing under the most beautiful tree you have ever seen. Smell the country air. Hear the birds. Feel the country grass soft beneath your feet. Stretch your body to the left and to the right. Stand up on the balls of your feet and look to the left and to the right. Look forward and behind you. See the gorgeous countryside with its hills and valleys, flowers, and cool streams. All of a sudden, a beautiful horse comes up to you. Jump up on the horse and ride bareback. Gallop in the wind. Relax and enjoy the ride through the country. Guide the horse back to the tree and get off. Lie down and pretend that a cloud comes down to take you back to the classroom.

Warm Up



Read the introduction of this chapter aloud. How far can you read without taking a breath?

breathing

the necessary process of inhaling and exhaling air to live.

diaphragm

the muscle located between the abdomen and the rib cage.

Breathing

As you know, **breathing** is the necessary process of inhaling and exhaling air to live. As a young actor, you must learn to control your breathing. Controlled breathing gives the performer enough power to carry the voice and be clearly heard.

Onstage, you need to inhale more deeply than you do in regular breathing, which translates into using more muscles. This type of inhalation allows you to build volume and vary your vocal sounds without running out of breath or straining your voice. Exhaling should also be stronger and with more control than in your everyday breathing. Your muscles, especially the **diaphragm** (the muscle located between the abdomen and the rib cage), must be used to supply the air

Developing breath control is always essential onstage. It is especially important in productions that require singing or dancing, such as in this production of *The King and I*.



breath control

the amount of force you use in inhaling and exhaling.

you need to create sound. **Breath control** is how much force you use in inhalation and exhalation.

Controlled breathing will help you develop an effective voice onstage and provide the support you will need to sustain you through performances. But another reason controlled breathing is so important is that it influences the body and its movements. When actors first begin performing onstage, their movements are often awkward and unnatural. They always seem to be out of breath after speaking several lines. But after developing breath control and practicing their breathing exercises every day, most actors notice that they have more energy onstage. Their body movements are then more effective as they rehearse and perform.

ACTION

1. **Book Rest.** Lie down on the floor in the classroom. Rest a book on your diaphragm (the muscle between the abdomen and the rib cage). Watch the book rise when you inhale and fall when you exhale. Continue this exercise for about a minute.
2. **Observation Time.** Observe closely the difference between everyday breathing and breathing while speaking. Observe inhaling and exhaling for both types of breathing by placing your hands on your stomach, just below the rib cage. Also notice changes in upper body and lower body tension as you breathe.
3. **Air Release.** Breathe deeply and inhale slowly. Hold your breath and release the air slowly, counting 1 to 6. Repeat this process to see how well you can control your breathing as you say the numbers.

4. **Ha, Ha, Ha!** Slowly inhale and hold your breath for 10 counts. Exhale on the sound of “ha.”
5. **Ah!!!!!!** Slowly inhale and hold for 10 counts. Exhale on the sound of “ah.”
6. **Snake.** Inhale as if you were about to speak. Now exhale and make the sound of a snake—“s-s-s-s-s-s.”
7. **Pucker Up!** Pucker your lips, and hold the tip of your finger in front of your lips. Quickly inhale and blow out a stream of air. Concentrate on producing a steady, smooth stream of air each time you repeat this exercise. Feel the difference in the air on your finger when there is a change in the stream of air.
8. **Phrases.** Slowly inhale. Next practice saying phrases, working on your breath control. Suggested phrases are: good morning, good luck, break a leg, nice day, good show, and thank you.
9. **Using Poetry for Breath Control.** Read Jack Prelutsky’s poem “Life’s Not Been the Same in My Family” to practice breath control. See how far you can read without taking a breath.

Life’s Not Been the Same in My Family

Life’s not been the same in my family
since the day that the new baby came,
my parents completely ignore me,
they scarcely remember my name.

The baby gets all their attention,
“Oh, isn’t she precious!” they croon,
they think she looks like an angel,
I think she resembles a prune.

They’re thrilled when she giggles and gurgles,
“She burped!” they exclaimed with delight,
they don’t even mind when she wakes us
with deafening screams in the night.

They seem to believe she’s a treasure,
there’s simply no way I agree,
I wish she’d stop being a baby
and start being older than me.

10. **Poetry Scavenger Hunt.** Find three other poems that would help develop your breath control.

OUR THEATRE HERITAGE



The Italian Renaissance

In the years stretching from the late 1300s through the early 1600s, the cultural center of Europe was Italy. This period of cultural advancement and activity is known as the *Renaissance*. The Renaissance was a time for great advancement not only in the theatre but in all of the arts.

It is during this period that theatre was transformed from its Medieval form to a type of theatre much closer to our modern style. Much of the new theatre activity resulted from the merchants sponsoring artists to create works of art, such as plays, for the enjoyment of their family and friends. This system of providing financial support was known as *patronage*. The subject matter of the arts changed from the religious topics, which had been dominant in the Middle Ages, to more earthly matters, and is focused upon human rather than divine activity. This new way of looking at the world was known as *humanism*.

Neoclassical Ideas

The new Renaissance rules of writing drama, known as the *Neoclassical Ideals*, were very important because they dominated opinions about the best ways to write plays for over two hundred years. The Neoclassical theories were based upon the then recently rediscovered writings of the Greek and Roman playwrights and the writings of the Greek philosopher Aristotle. The Renaissance writers thought they had found the rules about the proper way to write and create theater, so they created plays that copied the stories and themes of the Greek and Roman plays.

The Neoclassical Ideals were concerned with what is called *verisimilitude*, which means “being true to life.” Verisimilitude is what the Renaissance playwrights mistakenly believed that Aristotle was dictating. Therefore, the Renaissance philosophy demanded that all characters and situations be recognizable and verifiable from real life. To make sure that this rule of verisimilitude was followed, all plays had to have a unity of time (requiring that the action of the play not cover more than twenty-four hours), unity of place (requiring that the action all take place in one locale), and unity of action (re-

quiring that the plot have only one story line, with no subplots). In some Renaissance theatre, such as that of Elizabethan England and Spain’s Golden Age of drama, the Neoclassical ideals were ignored, but most European countries followed the rules of verisimilitude.

Changes in Space and Style

During the Renaissance, changes and discoveries in visual art had a major effect upon the arrangement of space and visual imagery inside the theatre. Italian artists discovered how to use angles and variation in the size of objects represented in the same painting to create the illusion of depth, or a sense of realistic, three-dimensional space. This was called *perspective painting*. The use of perspective in paintings replaced the medieval practices of painting, which made images seem flat.

Some of the most important people in theatre history in this period were architects, who changed forever the way theatre buildings would be built. In the early 1600s, architects first began to design proscenium arches, or picture-frame openings around the stage space. The oldest surviving theatre from this period is located in Vicenza, Italy, and named the *Teatro Olimpico*. It was completed in the year 1585 and could hold up to 3,000 people. Although it had no proscenium arch, the stage had a permanent facade (fake building front built on stage to represent a large building), which reflected the new concern with visual perspective. Like the Roman scene houses in the earlier period, the Olimpico’s facade had a series of doorways built into a massive, ornate wall that could be used to represent the households of various families in the plays. These doorways were different from their Roman counterparts in that they had long hallways or alleyways built into them. These alleyways ran at sharp angles away from the audience, giving the illusion of deep interior spaces within the homes of the play’s characters.

The concern with perspective was to soon change the use of the facade. The facade gave way to the use of painted scenery, which could be shifted to reveal new settings behind it. Soon, painted flats (painted

Historical and Cultural Perspectives



The **Teatro Olimpico** in Vicenza, Italy is the oldest surviving theatre from the Italian Renaissance Period. Notice the long hallways leading from the stage that contributed to the illusion of depth.

canvases representing three-dimensional walls) were replacing fixed, architectural stage houses as the basic unit of scenery. This change is what made building proscenium arches popular. The arch gave audience members the sense that they were looking at a walking, talking, moving, transforming, singing painting when they went to the theatre.

In the Middle Ages, the style had been to use mansions to represent heaven, hell, Earth, and other specific settings—all visible to the audience at the same time. In the Renaissance it was much more popular to reveal only one setting at a time. This made it necessary to hide from view all the flats except the one being used at a given time. The proscenium arch was the solution. While serving as a huge picture frame, it also hid the extra flats and the system of ropes, pulleys, and tracking needed to move the flats. As the period progressed, the audience began to want more and more changes of setting, which led to the building of permanent proscenium arches.

The first theatre to have a proscenium stage was the Teatro Farnese, in Parma, Italy, completed in 1618. For the Farnese scenery, painters used perspective techniques to create a painted series of wings or flats, which were placed one behind the other on both sides of the stage, so that they could be slid away to reveal the next set. These flats usually ap-

peared to be houses along a city street. The setting was closed off at the back of the stage with a painted drop or a large set of wings called *shutters*, which met in the middle of the stage and could be slid away to reveal another backdrop. The use of these multiple settings required that newer theatre buildings have more backstage space to store scenery and equipment. This meant that Renaissance stages became larger and larger, and deeper and deeper, to house all the scenery and to provide the visual depth that had become so popular in visual arts.

Although the Italians were very concerned with perspective, they did not find it necessary to create new scenery for each play. Instead they reused three standard styles of settings, one for tragedies (showing the street of a wealthy neighborhood), another for a comedy (showing a common street lined with lower-class homes), and a third setting for pastoral plays (showing trees, hillsides, and simple country cottages). The practice was to reuse these basic settings over and over, depending upon the style and genre of the play being produced.

The first comedy written in Italian was *La Cassaria* by Ludovico Ariosto. *La Cassaria* is a comedy that combines classical form with a more contemporary sense of earthy humor. The first important tragedy was *Sofonisba* by Giangiorgio Trissino. ■

LESSON 2

Quality, Pitch, and Flexibility

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Define quality, pitch, and flexibility.
- ◆ Understand the function and importance of quality, pitch, and flexibility.
- ◆ Recognize and break bad speaking habits.
- ◆ Participate in drills, exercises, and activities for developing and improving an actor's voice quality, pitch, and flexibility.
- ◆ Begin developing good speaking habits for a lifetime.

Warm Up



List three people whose voices you admire. Why?

quality

the voice element that makes one person sound different from everyone else.

Quality

Quality is the voice element that makes you sound different from everyone else. People recognize you from the unique sound of your voice. You don't have much choice regarding the quality of your voice. But you can eliminate (or at least lessen) annoying habits that produce poor voice quality. Examples of poor voice quality are huskiness, nasality (sounds produced by allowing your breath to pass through your nose when you talk), and a thin, weak quality.

Voice quality and emotional state are closely connected. Your emotions are reflected through the quality of your voice. For example, people can tell if you are happy or angry, depending on whether your voice is pleasant or unpleasant. Even when you aren't aware of it, your voice quality reflects your personality and moods.

As an actor, you will need to use a variety of voice qualities to interpret and portray different characters. When you speak onstage, your voice quality will reflect your character's emotional frame of mind. It is necessary to have effective voice qualities to develop the character that you portray.

ACTION

- 1. Quality Warm-Ups.** Roll your head forward, backward, and sideways. Massage your face and lips to loosen the muscles. Relax your tongue, jaw, and throat by yawning slowly. After physically exercising these areas, mentally prepare these body parts before you participate in the exercises to improve your voice quality. To be mentally prepared, focus on keeping the face, lips, tongue, jaw, and throat relaxed for adequate control.
- 2. Emotional Survey.** Using different emotions, say these words: yes, no, it's okay, finally, sure, great. Suggested emotions to use are: happy, sad, fearful, angry, and jealous.
- 3. Louder, I Can't Hear You.** Say the following words quietly at first.

Warm Up



In your journal, describe the tone of your voice. (Is it too high, low, shrill, or nasal?)

pitch

the musical tone of a voice.

vocal folds

muscular membranes in the larynx that produce sound.

inflection

the rising and falling of pitch. Inflection adds meaning, color, and rhythm to spoken words.

Then repeat them louder and louder, then finally stronger using more breath support. Practice using your best voice quality.

may	won	play	wink	tune
say	sun	clay	sink	loon
day	done	way	rink	moon

Pitch

Pitch is the musical tone of your voice—how high or how low you speak on a musical scale. It is one of the voice elements that gives meaning and color to speech. Pitch is determined by the vibration of your **vocal folds**, muscular membranes located in the larynx, or what is often called the “voice box.” The faster the folds vibrate, the higher the pitch. The slower the folds vibrate, the lower the pitch. The shape and size of the vocal folds also make a difference in the tone of a person’s voice. The loss of your voice after two hours of yelling at a football or basketball game is the result of strained muscles—your vocal folds. They are swollen and vibrate very slowly when you try to speak, causing a low pitch, often hoarseness.

You can find your pitch by matching your voice against the scales of a piano. Once you find your pitch, remember that this is the level that is best for you personally for the richest tone and greatest ease in speaking. You are born with this pitch, and not much can be done to change your natural pitch. But you can learn to manipulate your pitch for the stage.

Two common flaws onstage are a thin, high tone and a monotone. A high, thin pitch can be corrected with concentration and a conscious effort to lower your speaking tone. A person who speaks in a monotone (speaking without a change in pitch) needs **inflection**, the rising and falling of pitch. Vocal inflection is essential for the actor. Besides giving the voice variety in its pitch, inflection adds meaning, color, and rhythm to words. Inflection makes a voice interesting. When you listen to a teacher who never changes pitch—talks in a flat monotone—it’s hard to pay attention; your mind wanders. But a teacher who uses inflection effectively can stimulate your mind for hours.

ACTION



1. Which Pitch Did You Use? Say the following three times, changing your pitch each time.

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| a. Yes. | c. I don’t know. |
| b. No. | d. I knew that. |

Repeat the activity. Be prepared to explain what you meant each time you said the word or words. For example, “yes,” can mean “I will do it,” “I’m not sure,” or “Sure” uttered sarcastically.

2. Rising and Falling Inflection. Say the numbers 2, 4, 6, 8, with a rising inflection. Say the numbers 2, 4, 6, 8 with a falling inflection. Repeat this drill several times.



An oscilloscope displays an electronic graph of your voice.

oscilloscope

an instrument that can be used to record voice vibrations and show voice patterns.

Warm Up



Say the following sentence three different ways by changing your voice:
“What happened to you?”

flexibility

the process of varying inflections of the voice.

poise

the effective control of all voice elements and body movements.

3. What Did You Say? Using gibberish (senseless chatter) and varying the inflection in your voice, explain the following.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. how to get somewhere | f. how to operate a small appliance |
| b. what's in an imaginary box | g. how to play a sport |
| c. what someone looked like | h. where you are from |
| d. how to solve a math problem | i. who's in your family |
| e. how to cook an egg | j. an idea of your own |

4. Patterns. If your science lab has an **oscilloscope** (an instrument that records vibrations produced by charges of electricity), take turns reading this sentence: “It wasn't so much what he said as how he said it.” Watch the pattern of your voice on the oscilloscope. Compare all voice patterns in the class.

5. Would You Please Repeat That? Practice repeating this question—“What did you do?”—five different ways. Place emphasis on the different words in the question to make each way effective.

Flexibility

You will be able to keep the members of an audience on the edge of their seats if you vary your pitch and exhibit flexibility. **Flexibility** is the result of using the muscles in your face, tongue, jaw, lips, and throat in a lively manner. It is also a process of varying inflections as you speak. Vocal flexibility is created in a number of ways: using variety in the sounds of words; placing emphasis, or stress, on certain syllables, words, or groups of words in an unexpected way; phrasing words and sentences in a particular way; and using pauses, which provide the element of timing—not only for the actor, but also for the audience, helping them grasp what is being said.

As an actor, you may be hesitant to use pauses, but they are extremely effective in communicating onstage. A pause can be as meaningful as a spoken line. It can give an audience the interpretation of the script intended by the playwright.

Another skill that you need to develop is poise. **Poise** is the effective control of all your vocal elements and body movements. Poise can give you a calm, confident manner. But it can only come as a result of the self-confidence that you gain from your training in vocal elements and body movements.

Actors find as they develop flexibility that they are able to express the meaning of lines more clearly.

ACTION



1. It's a Date! Divide into pairs, a girl and a boy. Carry on a conversation asking for a date and accepting the date, using only first names as the dialogue. Vary your inflection for emphasis and interest.

2. Express Yourself with a Song. Sing the following songs as warm-ups, drills, exercises, activities, and fun.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| a. Happy Birthday | g. Oh! Susanna! |
| b. Row, Row, Row Your Boat | h. Yankee Doodle Went to Town |
| c. London Bridge | i. She'll Be Coming Around the Mountain |
| d. This Old Man | j. another song—your choice |
| e. I'm a Little Teapot | |
| f. Old MacDonald Had a Farm | |

3. Poetry Inflection. Read the following poem, "A Word" by the famous American poet, Emily Dickinson, three different ways:

● A word is dead
When it is said,
Some say.

● I say it just
Begins to live
That day.

4. Short Statements. Practice saying the following short sentences. Concentrate on changing meaning when you repeat them, adding color and emphasis to different words.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| a. The world's a stage. | g. Come on down. |
| b. You are my sunshine. | h. United we stand. |
| c. You haven't seen anything yet. | i. Divided we fall. |
| d. I never met a man I didn't like. | j. Do whatever it takes. |
| e. Oh, what a beautiful morning. | k. Take a risk. |
| f. You can't do that. | l. Make a difference. |

5. Say It Again Sam! Repeat the sentences in exercise 4, assuming a different character each time. Make up your own characters—for example, a cowboy, a doctor, an old woman, a young child, a newscaster, an astronaut, a rock star, a sports hero, a movie star, a preacher.



Articulation and Pronunciation

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Define articulation and pronunciation.
- ◆ Understand the function and importance of articulation and pronunciation.
- ◆ Participate in drills, exercises, and activities that develop and improve an actor's articulation and pronunciation.

Radio announcers or deejays must have excellent articulation. Hearing is the only sense their audience can use in understanding them.



Warm Up



Before reading aloud one of the passages assigned by your teacher, stretch your facial muscles by smiling and frowning three times.

articulation

the shaping and molding of sounds into syllables.

Articulation

Articulation is the shaping and molding of sounds into syllables. We use all of our articulators (lips, tongue, teeth, hard and soft palates, jaw, muscles, and nasal passageways) in articulation. The process of learning vowels and consonants begins early in childhood. It is then that many bad speaking habits are formed. Some common bad habits are slurring sounds and words, not completing the endings of sounds and words, and generally not speaking distinctly (clearly).

To develop good vocal habits for the stage, you need to practice your articulation daily. One of the best ways to do this is to recite tongue twisters. Articulation drills will not only improve your articulation for the stage but will also train your ear to hear the way you speak in everyday life.

ACTION

1. **Tongue Twisters.** Practice your articulation with the following tongue twisters. Practice each one three times. If you have difficulty with any tongue twister, spend more time practicing it until you have mastered all twenty-six tongue twisters.
 - a. Ruby red rubber baby buggy bumpers.
 - b. Eight great gray geese grazing gaily into Greece.
 - c. Tie twine to three tree twigs.
 - d. The old cold scold sold the school coal scuttle.
 - e. What noise annoys a noisy oyster most? A noisy noise annoys a noisy oyster most.
 - f. Did you see Peter Piper's puppy peeping playfully?
 - g. She sells seashells at the seashore's seashell store.
 - h. Let Letty linger longer at the luncheon.

- i. He is a nice man, not an ice man.
- j. Sinful Caesar sipped his sniffer, seized his knee and sneezed.
- k. She says such shabbily sewed seams show seriously.
- l. Strange strategic statistics.
- m. Round and round the rugged rocks the ragged rascal ran.
- n. Thissian Thistle, the successful thistle sifter, sifts sieves full of three thousand thistles through the thick of this thumb.
- o. Double bubble gum bubbles double.
- p. Six slick slim slippery slimy sleek slender sickly saplings.
- q. Can a stammerer flatter a flatterer?
- r. The sun shines on shop signs.
- s. Truly rural rustic trees.
- t. Shy Sarah saw Swiss wristwatches.
- u. The sixth sheik's sixth sheep's sick.
- v. Are you copper-bottoming them, my man? No, I'm aluminuming 'em, mum.
- w. From "A Fly and a Flea in a Flue" by an anonymous poet.

A fly and a flea in a flue
 Were imprisoned, so what could they do?
 Said the fly, "Let us flee!"
 "Let us fly!" said the flea,
 And they flew through a flaw in the flue.

- x. From "Grace at Kirkudbright" by Robert Burns.

Some have meat and cannot eat,
 Some cannot eat that want it:
 But we have meat and we can eat,
 Sae let the Lord be thankit.

- y. From "Weather" by an anonymous poet.

Whether the weather be fine
 Or whether the weather be not,
 Whether the weather be cold,
 Or whether the weather be hot,
 We'll weather the weather
 Whatever the weather,
 Whether we like it or not.

- z. From "A Publisher Who Published Papers" by an anonymous poet.

A publisher who published papers
 Plenty of pens and pictures wished,
 To pile up his pages with capers
 Of prestigious professors who fished.

2. Clear Articulation Check. Ask your teacher or a classmate to listen

to you read the following sentences. Ask a partner to circle the sounds of the words (on a separate sheet of paper) that are not spoken clearly.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| a. The healthier, the better. | f. The women climbed the mountain. |
| b. Feel free to leave. | g. The men ran the race. |
| c. It sounds correct to me. | h. The hot chocolate burned my tongue. |
| d. I like fried french fries. | i. Please go away. |
| e. This will soon pass. | j. Stay another hour. |

3. Rhyme Time.

Practice your articulation with these nursery rhymes.

- ☐ **a.** Mary had a little lamb. Its fleece was white as snow.
And everywhere that Mary went the lamb was sure to go.
- ☐ **b.** Jack be nimble. Jack be quick. Jack jump over the candle stick.
- ☐ **c.** There was an old lady who lived in a shoe.
She had so many children she didn't know what to do.
- ☐ **d.** Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water.
Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.
- ☐ **e.** Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream,
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,
Life is but a dream.
- ☐ **f.** Three blind mice,
Three blind mice,
See how they run!
See how they run!
They all ran after the farmer's wife,
Who cut off their tails with the carving knife,
Did you ever hear such a thing in your life,
As three blind mice?
- ☐ **g.** Oh where, oh where has my little dog gone?
Oh where, oh where can he be?
With his ears cut short and his tail cut long,
Oh where, oh where can he be?
- ☐ **h.** Jack Sprat could eat no fat.
His wife could eat no lean.
Betwixt the two of them they licked the platter clean.

4. Father to Son.

Read the following lines from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Use all your articulators with energy and vitality.

- ☐ "You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws are too weak
For anything tougher than suet;
Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak—
Pray, how did you manage to do it?"
- ☐ "In my youth," said his father, "I took to the law,
And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength which it gave to my jaw,
Has lasted the rest of my life."
- ☐

pronunciation

the way sounds or syllables that represent a word are said and stressed according to the proper notation found in the dictionary.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation refers to the way words are said. Proper pronunciation means that words are spoken according to dictionary notations.

Warm Up



Pronounce the following words:

mischievous advertisement
indict get
theatre acquittal

If you are unsure of the correct pronunciation, which of the following would be the best source?

- a. your smartest friend*
- b. the glossary of a language arts book*
- c. a dictionary*

diction

a person's pronunciation of words, choice of words, and manner in which the person expresses himself or herself.

dialect

a pronunciation of words from different languages blended together to form a distinct language for a group of people.

accent

the manner in which people speak and the way words are pronounced in different parts of the world.

Pronunciation helps us distinguish the correct sounding out of a word, dictating which letters of a word are to be articulated. Proper pronunciation, like articulation, results from people being aware of how our language differentiates the sound of one word from another. You may remember being corrected when you mispronounced a word as a child. If so, you can count yourself as one of the lucky ones. Someone cared enough to correct your pronunciation. Proper pronunciation is seen as the mark of an educated person. It often will result in that person getting a good job.

Who decides the correct pronunciation of a word? Your dictionary is probably your most dependable source. A dictionary is not the only authority for a pronunciation, but people who write dictionaries are experts who have done a great deal of research to determine the accepted pronunciation of a word.

Before rehearsing the lines of a play, use a dictionary (or other accepted source) for difficult pronunciations and unfamiliar meanings. Certain words may not be in the dictionary you are using. You may have to research those words, perhaps getting help from more educated people or people from other cultures. Other sources that may help you with pronunciations are your language arts teacher, your parents, the librarian, and foreign language teachers.

During your theatre experiences, you will probably encounter three other terms related to pronunciation: diction, dialect, and accent.

Diction is a person's pronunciation of words, choice of words, and manner in which the person expresses himself or herself. Developing good diction is a valuable tool for life and essential for the stage.

Dialect is a pronunciation of words from different languages blended together to form a distinct language for a group of people. Diction and dialects enhance characterization. A character onstage takes on a whole new dimension when you use, for example, a Jamaican dialect. This type of character development requires time, research, and practice. **Accent** is the manner in which people speak; it is the way words are pronounced in different parts of the world. The use of stress and emphasis contribute to a word's accent.

ACTION



1. Pronunciation Check. Check your pronunciation of the following words, which are often mispronounced.

pin	cent	picture	entire	infamous
pen	thin	pitcher	horizon	medicinal
any	can't	town	idea	mischievous
get	catch	debate	ideal	preference
just	measure	disclose	incomparable	

2. It's All in the Endings. Pronounce the following words, whose endings are often left off when spoken.

madder	battle	city	tests	toward
ladder	water	rests	tasks	
paddle	wetter	wasps	desks	
saddle	butter	discs	mists	

3. Dictionary Scavenger Hunt. Look up in the dictionary any of the following words for which you are unsure of the pronunciation or meaning. Be prepared to read the list aloud and explain any definition.

abdomen	data	hospitable	oscilloscope	travail
address	detour	illustrate	pianist	vaudeville
automobile	dictionary	interesting	preferable	vice versa
aviation	exquisite	laboratory	presentation	
bouquet	forehead	magazine	route	
clique	grimace	medicinal	status	
coupe	harass	military	suet	
coupon	harassment	ordeal	suite	

LESSON 4

Volume and Rate

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Define volume and rate.
- ◆ Understand the function and importance of volume and rate.
- ◆ Participate in drills, exercises, and activities for developing and improving an actor's volume and rate.

Volume

volume

how softly or loudly a person speaks.

Even with the advantages of modern technology, actors still need exceptional volume, rate, and placement skills when performing outdoors.

Volume is how loudly or softly you speak. The basis for a person's volume is breath control. Actors must develop breath control to regulate the amount of air being used when speaking. They also need to



Warm Up



After class today, keep a mental record of how many times someone asks you to repeat what you said. Also count how many times you ask someone else to repeat what he or she said.

use proper voice placement (directing the voice where the audience is located). Otherwise, the result will be uneven volume or unclear sounds and words.

The distance between the actor and the audience will be a problem if volume is not used properly. As you can imagine, your audience will be disappointed if they can't hear what you are saying. Shouting is never an answer. You can place your voice where it is needed by focusing your vocal energy to your listeners. It is your responsibility, as an actor, to train your voice for adequate volume. You must constantly have the desire to be heard, and you must understand what it takes to reach that goal. A good performance demands it.

Remember that good posture and breath control are essential in the drills and exercises for improving your volume. The diaphragm plays the key role in producing volume for the stage.

ACTION



- 1. Counting the 5s.** Count slowly by 5s—5, 10, 15, 20, and so on—increasing your volume with each number.
- 2. Counting the 5s with Stress.** Repeat exercise 1, this time emphasizing every other number. On each number that is emphasized, mentally and verbally project the sound farther and farther away.
- 3. Hello!** While carefully inhaling, say the word “hello” and repeat it several times. Begin softly and increase the loudness. Repeat the drill in reverse, going from loud to soft.
- 4. ABCs.** Recite the letters of the alphabet, increasing the volume with each letter. Repeat the drill starting with the last letter of the alphabet. This time begin loudly and get softer.
- 5. The Comics Are Everywhere.** Bring your favorite comic strip or comic book to class. Read the passage in a variety of places. For example, begin by reading to a small group; next, read in front of the entire class; then move to a cafeteria or an auditorium; and finally, read outside to a group. You must physically and mentally adjust your breathing and volume for each location.
- 6. Favorite Children's Story.** Repeat exercise 5 using a favorite childhood story.

Warm Up



In your journal, explain why listening to someone talk too fast or too slow results in ineffective communication.

Rate

Rate is the speed at which you speak. Rate and volume affect each other. Again, breath control is important in having an effective rate both for everyday speaking and onstage. Many actors mispronounce and slur their words when they speak too fast. When this happens, the audience becomes lost and confused.

Never cause your audience to misunderstand what's going on because of rapid speaking. Rate is one of the elements of voice that can be

rate

the speed at which someone speaks.

effectively used for characterization. You must give your audience time to listen and think about what they hear. Onstage, some characters do need to speak rapidly, but it is possible to control articulation inside a rapid rate. Always remember that this is the first time, and probably the only time, the audience will see and hear the performance.

ACTION



- 1. Watching Time Go By.** Using the second hand on a watch, time yourself counting. Count from 1 to 5 in 5 seconds. Count from 1 to 10 in 10 seconds. Count from 1 to 20 in 20 seconds. Learn to control your rate when you speak. Repeat the drill and ask a classmate to listen to your rate. Experiment with speaking at various rates. Have the volunteer suggest your best rate of speaking to be easily understood.
- 2. Story Time.** Bring a folktale, fairy tale, or children's story to class. Divide into pairs and read the stories to each other. Practice reading at a rate that is understandable. Vary your rate to make the story interesting and lively.
- 3. Rhyme Time.** Read the following poems aloud, varying your rate for the best vocal reading.

Silver

Slowly, silently, now the moon
Walks the night in her silver shoon;
This way, and that, she peers, and sees
Silver fruit upon silver trees;
One by one the casements catch
Her beams beneath the silvery thatch;
Couched in his kennel, like a log,
With paws of silver sleeps the dog;
From their shadowy cote the white breasts peep
Of doves in a silver-feathered sleep;
A harvest mouse goes scampering by,
With silver claws, and silver eye;
And moveless fish in the water gleam,
By silver reeds in a silver stream.

Walter de la Mare

City, City

I

City, city,
Wrong and bad,
Looms above me
When I'm sad,
Throws its shadow
On my care,
Sheds its poison
In my air,
Pounds me with its
Noisy fist,

○ Sprays me with its
Sooty mist.
Till, with sadness
○ On my face,
I long to live
Another place.

○ **II**
City, city,
Golden-clad,
○ Shines around me
When I'm glad,
Lifts me with its
○ Strength and height,
Fills me with its
Sound and sight,
○ Takes me to its
Crowded heart,
Holds me so I
○ Won't depart.
Till, with gladness
On my face,
○ I wouldn't live
Another place.

○ *Marci Ridlon*

4. **Judging Rate from the Stage.** Bring to class an acceptable article from a favorite magazine or book. Choose a paragraph to read aloud. Focus on your rate of speaking. Go to the stage or cafeteria to read the passage. Repeat the activity, but tell from memory what you have read to the class. Notice the changes in your rate.



Projection

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Define projection.
- ◆ Understand the function and importance of projection in performance.
- ◆ Participate in drills, exercises, and activities to develop and improve an actor's projection.

projection

the placement and delivery of voice elements used effectively in communicating to an audience.

Projection is the placement and delivery of all the characteristics of an effective voice to communicate with your audience. It makes no difference where you are performing—classroom, cafeteria, small courtyard, or auditorium—your audience must be able to understand

Warm Up



Think of someone who seems to always make himself/herself clearly understood regardless of where he/she is (outside, a classroom, gym, auditorium, cafeteria, and so on). What does that person do that is different from others whom you cannot understand?

you. Projection involves aiming your voice at a directed target. It combines all the voice elements discussed earlier. As an actor, it is your responsibility to use all the techniques available to you.

Projection involves delivering your lines to the audience, and energy is vital in the delivery of those lines. You constantly must be aware of where the audience is. Not only must you remember all the aspects of acting and speaking onstage; you must also remain aware of the audience's need to hear you.

Having the right attitude is critical. Proper and effective projection requires that you *want* to speak and perform well. Voice projection takes desire, study, and hours of work. The result, however, is that your audience will hear and understand the performance. They will enjoy and possibly even learn from the performance.

ACTION



1. Outdoor Theatre. Select or write a short monologue (script for one person) using themes involving teenage students (for example, peer pressure, boy/girl relationships, friendships, or problems youth face). Either read or memorize the monologue and present it outside, with the class as the audience. Focus on the placement and delivery (where your listeners are) of your lines.

2. Alphabet Olympics. Everyone in class participates at the same time, reciting the letters of the alphabet. Use projection, not volume, to be heard. Choose the classmate with the best projection and write in your journal why this person has effective projection. Be specific with your explanation of the effective vocal elements.

3. How Far Can You Project? Locate a large room, such as the cafeteria or auditorium. Work in pairs. Memorize the following sentence: "I have told you a hundred times, and the answer is still the same." Stand 15 feet apart from each other and take turns reciting the line. Continue by moving farther and farther apart. Focus on projecting, not shouting.

4. Stories for Projection. Select one of the following stories to tell in front of the class or onstage.

- The Three Bears
- The Three Pigs
- Little Red Riding Hood
- Three Billy Goats Gruff
- Speaker's choice

When projecting onstage, remember these points:

- Warm up the voice and body before performing.
- Be prepared mentally and physically.
- Relax the throat, and don't strain your throat muscles or the vocal folds.
- Use breath control, and breathe from the diaphragm.
- Use energy to apply effective voice elements clearly, distinctly, and without dropping the last words you speak.
- Use a clear, distinct tone when you speak—not a yell.
- Speak to other characters onstage as well as to the audience.
- Focus your lines as far back as the last seat in the auditorium.

In large theatres and auditoriums actors must project their voices so that they can be heard and understood by the audience members furthest from the stage.



5. Lines for Projection. Read the following lines from various plays in front of the class, onstage, outside, and at home, for practice with projection.

from **Butterflies are Free**

by Leonard Gershe

MRS. BAKER. Of course not. And I know you're not Snow White.

JILL. *(Takes the apple, rises, crosses below Mrs. Baker, through kitchen to D. L. post.)* I may have to wait hours before I read. I'll probably starve to death before their eyes.

MRS. BAKER. *(Crosses to kitchen, takes lettuce, picks off a few pieces, washes them, puts them on plate.)* You're going to get that part, you know.

JILL. What makes you so sure?

MRS. BAKER. Well, you're a very pretty girl and that's what they want in the theatre, isn't it?

JILL. *(Crosses below to D. R. post, away from Mrs. Baker.)* Today you have to have more than a pretty face. Anyway, I'm not really pretty. I think I'm interesting-looking and in certain lights I can look sort of . . . lovely . . . but I'm not pretty.

MRS. BAKER. *(Crosses with lettuce, sits C. sofa.)* Nonsense! You're extremely pretty.

JILL. *(Laugh.)* No, I'm not.

MRS. BAKER. Yes, you are.

JILL. *(Turns, leans post.)* No, I'm not. I've got beady little eyes like a bird and a figure like a pogo stick. *(Waits for a reaction from Mrs. Baker. There isn't one.)* Well? Aren't you going to deny you said that?

MRS. BAKER. *(Unperturbed.)* How can I, dear? Obviously, you heard it.

JILL. (*Crosses above director's chair.*) There are plenty of true things you can put me down with. You don't have to put me down with lies.

MRS. BAKER. You know what I like about you?

JILL. Uh-huh. Nothing.

MRS. BAKER. Oh yes. I like your honesty . . . your candor. You're really quite a worldly young woman, aren't you, Mrs. Benson?

JILL. I suppose I am. (*Crosses above "picnic," away from Mrs. Baker.*) I wish you wouldn't call me Mrs. Benson.

MRS. BAKER. Isn't that your name . . . Mrs. Benson?

JILL. But you don't say it as though you mean it.

MRS. BAKER. I'm sorry. Why don't I call you Jill? That's more friendly . . . and I'll try to say it as though I mean it. Now, Jill, (*Jill—R. turn, back to audience.*) you were telling me about your childhood.

JILL. I was?

You're A Good Man Charlie Brown

Based on the comic strip *Peanuts*
by Charles M. Schulz

CHARLIE BROWN. I think lunchtime is about the worst time of the day for me. Always having to sit here alone. Of course, sometimes mornings aren't so pleasant, either—waking up and wondering if anyone would really miss me if I never got out of bed. Then there's the night, too—lying there and thinking about all the stupid things I've done during the day. And all those hours in between—when I do all those stupid things. Well, lunchtime is *among* the worst times of the day for me.

Well, I guess I'd better see what I've got. (*He opens the bag, unwraps a sandwich, and looks inside*) Peanut butter. (*He bites and chews*) Some psychiatrists say that people who eat peanut butter sandwiches are lonely. I guess they're right. And if you're really lonely, the peanut butter sticks to the roof of your mouth. (*He munches quietly, idly fingering the bench*) Boy, the PTA sure did a good job of painting these benches. (*He looks off to one side*) There's that cute little redheaded girl eating her lunch over there. I wonder what she'd do if I went over and asked her if I could sit and have lunch with her. She'd probably laugh right in my face. It's hard on a face when it gets laughed in. There's an empty place next to her on the bench. There's no reason why I couldn't just go over and sit there. I could do that right now. All I have to do is stand up. (*He stands*) I'm standing up. (*He sits*) I'm sitting down. I'm a coward. I'm so much of a coward she wouldn't even think of looking at me. She hardly ever does look at me. In fact, I can't remember her ever looking at me. Why shouldn't she look at me? Is there any reason in the world why she shouldn't look at me? Is she so great and am I so small that she couldn't spare one little moment just to . . . (*He freezes*) She's looking at me. (*In terror he looks one way, then another*) She's looking at me. (*In terror he looks one way, then another*) She's *looking* at me.

(His head looks all around, frantically trying to find something also to notice. His teeth clench. Tension builds. Then, with one motion, he pops the paper bag over his head. LUCY and PATTY enter)

LUCY. No, Patty, you're thinking of that other dress, the one I wore to Lucinda's party. The one I'm talking about was this very light blue one and had a design embroidered around the waist.

PATTY. I don't remember that dress.

LUCY. *(Takes a pencil and draws matter-of-factly on the bottom of the paper bag)* Something like this. The skirt went out like this and it had these puffy sleeves and a sash like this.

PATTY. Oh yes, I remember.

LUCY. Yes, well *that* was the dress I was wearing last week when I met Frieda and she told me she'd seen one just like it over at . . . *(The girls have exited. CHARLIE BROWN sits immobile as their voices fade)*

CHARLIE BROWN. *(The paper bag still pulled over his head)* Lunchtime is among the worst times of the day for me

Selected Lines by William Shakespeare

Let me have men about me that are fat,
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep a-nights.
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look.
He thinks too much. Such men are dangerous.
Julius Caesar, Act. 1, Scene 2, 192–195

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts.
As You Like It, Act. 2, Scene 7, 139–142

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.
Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 5, 19–28

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls;
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed.
Othello, Act 2, Scene 3, 155–161

Curtain Call!

CHAPTER 5 REVIEW

■ ■ SPOTLIGHT ON TERMS ■ ■

An important part of theatre is understanding the terminology, or vocabulary, used. Add the new terms and definitions to the vocabulary section of your theatre notebook or folder.

■ ■ FOCUS ON FACTS ■ ■

1. Why is it important to be relaxed before speaking and moving onstage?
2. How is everyday breathing different from breathing onstage?
3. Which voice element makes the sound of your voice different from all other voices?
4. List three articulators that help you shape and mold sounds.
5. Who or what is the authority on the pronunciation of a word?
6. Explain the difference between diction, dialect, and accent.
7. What is inflection? Why do you need to use it onstage?
8. Discuss the importance of control in using vocal elements effectively onstage.

■ ■ REFLECTIONS ■ ■

Discuss the following questions with your class or answer them on paper as instructed by your teacher.

1. What areas of your voice need improving?
2. In your opinion, what voice element is the most important? Why?
3. Which drill, exercise, or activity has helped you improve your voice?
4. What good speaking habits have you developed?

■ ■ THEATRE IN YOUR LIFE ■ ■

1. Write five goals you would like to accomplish in improving your voice this year.

2. List three drills, exercises, or activities you will use at home to reach the goals you have set.

■ ■ ENCORE ■ ■

1. After memorizing the following lines from the poem “The Lord Chancellor’s Nightmare,” by W. S. Gilbert, try using this poem as a 5- to 10-minute warm-up. Decide how to vary the tempo, or rate, of your delivery; the volume and the dynamics, or force, of your speech; and the pitch of your voice through inflection so that you will give the words of the poem the rhythm and expression that will best communicate their meaning.

The Nightmare

You’re a regular wreck with a crick in your neck.
No wonder you snore your head’s on the floor.

You’ve needles and pins from your soles to your shins.
Your flesh is a creep, for your left leg’s asleep.

You’ve a cramp in your toes, a fly on your nose,
some fluff
In your lungs, a feverish tongue, a thirst that’s intense and a
General sense that you haven’t been sleeping in clover.

But the darkness is passed—it’s daylight at last. The night
Has been long and ditto-ditto my song. Thank goodness
They are both of them over.

2. Make a list of tunes from Broadway shows or movies that the class can use for warm-ups and exercises for developing and improving the voice for the stage.