

VOCAL *Handbook*

YOUR GUIDE TO AN
AWESOME VOCAL
PERFORMANCE



VOCAL *Warmup*

GIVE IT A TRY!

**CLICK
Here!**



**for your vocal
warmup!**



Your voice is like a muscle. And just like any muscle, it benefits from a good warmup! Give this vocal warmup a shot for top-notch performance. Add it to the start of your practice or right before those big gigs—you'll feel the difference!

VOICE

Tips!



Here's a few tips for vocal health and performance—remember, it's not necessary to implement them all perfectly from the start. Just pick one to begin with and gradually build from there at your own pace.

1. **Begin with Self-awareness:**

Self-awareness is the secret sauce to vocal work and vocal health. Before you start your practice, take a moment to get your mindset in check. Regularly check in with yourself to prevent unnecessary tension (mental, physical, emotional).

2. **Watch for Trolls:**

Avoid fighting with negative thoughts and mental/emotional tension. Notice and replace negative thoughts with positive or neutral ones.

3. **Warm Up Before Practice:**

Spend 3-5 minutes warming up your voice before practice sessions.

4. **Breathe From Your Belly:**

Imagine a balloon inside your belly. Focus on expanding that balloon, 360-degrees at your ribcage, while inhaling. Speak from the belly, on the exhaled air, belly consistently moving inward.

5. **Practice Consistency:**

Practice consistently for shorter durations (30-45min, 3-5 times a week) rather than sporadic long sessions. (*For TEDx, you'll likely practice on the daily.)

6. **Build Stamina:**

Like any muscle, vocal cords need regular exercise to build stamina. Vocal warmups and regular practice are key.

7. **Rest When Tired:**

Take rest days when vocally tired to prevent strain.

8. **Listen to Your Body When Sick:**

If there's no throat pain, it's generally safe to continue. Rest is essential if throat pain is present. (Unless you have a gig.)

9. **Stay Hydrated:**

Hydration is crucial for vocal health. Start hydrating at least 3 days before performances. (It takes about 20 minutes for the body to digest and distribute water. Water goes to all other major organs first, anything left over gets sent to our voice.) Resist the urge to “chug” water the day of the big gig - continual sipping is best. Aim for 8 glasses/day.

10. **Watch Your Diet:**

Aim to avoid excessive consumption of caffeine, alcohol, dairy, highly acidic, or greasy foods 3 days before performances. Focus on well-balanced meals with plenty of fruits and vegetables.

11. **Avoid Throat Clearing:**

Throat clearing should be gentle, ideally replaced with swallowing or humming.

12. **Temperature Considerations:**

Consume only room temperature food and drink before performing to avoid shocking vocal muscles.

13. **Record Yourself on the Regular**

Record your voice and listen back often. This is the most effective tool for voice work, as it's the most accurate representation of your voice.

14. **Develop Healthy Speaking Habits:**

Practice healthy speaking habits regularly, not just during vocal practice sessions.

15. **Understand Nerves:**

Nerves are your body's innate reaction to perceived "danger" and they operate automatically, devoid of choice - aka without guilt or shame. Addressing nerves involves aligning your mindset with your “why,” ensuring supportive self-talk (resist getting involved in the troll's story), and maintaining mindful breathing. Pro tip: think of nerves as excitement without the breath.

16. **Incorporate Body Work:**

Cardio exercises such as running, hiking, swimming, or cycling are great for overall vocal health. Consider adding stretching or yoga for additional benefits.

VOCAL *Exercises*

FROM TEDX'S
CHRIS
ANDERSON

1.

Activity: Review Key Concepts

By using your voice and body to share your ideas with an audience -- live or on camera -- you have an opportunity to infuse a layer of inspiration into those ideas. Here are a few ways inspiration can strike:

- **Connection** - "I trust this person."
- **Engagement** - "Every sentence sounds so interesting."
- **Curiosity** - "I hear it in your voice and see it in your face."
- **Understanding** - "The emphasis on that word and that hand gesture. Now I get it."
- **Empathy** - "I can tell how much that hurt you."
- **Excitement** - "Wow. That passion is infectious."
- **Conviction** - "Such determination in those eyes."
- **Action** - "I want to be on your team. Sign me up."

Top tips:

- **Speak with meaning:** Think about volume, pitch (high, low notes), pace (speed), tone, and prosody (melody- flow of words, moving up and down your range).
- **Recruit your body:** Stand tall, use your hands and arms to naturally amplify what you're saying, and relax. If you choose to move, move intentionally. Make sure you're comfortable and confident in what you're saying and don't detract from what you're saying.

2. **Activity: Add variety to your script**

Now it's time to really think about what emotions are tied to each section of your talk, and where you might pause, smile, speed up, etc. If you haven't already, take a few minutes to draft a passage of your talk. Then think about how you can incorporate some of the tips mentioned here:

- Find the 2-3 words in each sentence that carry the most significance and underline them
- Look for the word in each paragraph that really matters and double-underline it
- Find sentences that are light in tone and run a wavy line under it
- Look for each question mark and highlight that sentence
- Find the big AHA moment of the talk and put a big star next to it
- If there is a funny antidote, put dots above it
- Find any jargon you might use in your talk and circle it so that you can replace it with more audience-friendly words/explanations.

3.

Activity: Record

For this next activity, try two different recordings and then watch them back to learn from your practice.

Step 1: For the first recording, stand up and deliver the passage of your talk using your most natural speaking voice. Don't worry about disfluencies or pauses, and don't worry if you can only recall one or two sentences of the passage. Just try to get a complete and coherent thought on camera. If your passage is long, don't record more than one minute of it.

Step 2: For your second recording, stand up and deliver the same passage again, but this time try to focus on improving one specific aspect of your delivery. Maybe it's a word or a turn of phrase? Maybe it's your posture or eye contact? Maybe it's the inflection of your voice? Write down what you're trying to improve before you hit record.

As a final step, review both of the recordings and consider what you liked and disliked about each mode of delivery. As this lesson's video pointed out, it's quite possible that you'll prefer the first recording over the second. More than likely, there will be things you like and dislike about both options. Whatever strengths and weaknesses you observe while reviewing the footage, the point of this exercise was to help you observe them early in your talk preparation process.

Moving forward, how will you craft your talk to play to your strengths? How will you practice improving what you disliked about your delivery? Look for opportunities to repeat this short exercise as you continue to develop your talk (even if you record by yourself). Recording and reviewing short segments of your talk and making small adjustments to your delivery can have a huge impact on your final presentation. *You know you're ready when your mind is not thinking about these tools or critiquing your performance through these tools - it's just happening.