

Optimal Pitch

Often times, actors have difficulty “finding” their voices. There are a variety of activities that can be done during voice therapy with a speech-language pathologist (SLP) that will determine the best pitch and allow the actor to redirect phonation.

- ❖ *Yawn and Sigh*- The yawn-sigh is one of the most effective techniques in reducing laryngeal tension. This technique is also helpful for finding the actors best pitch.
 - ❖ A yawn represents a prolonged inhalation with maximum widening of the airways.
 - ❖ After the actor yawns, following an example from the SLP, the actor will yawn again and then exhale gently with a light phonation. Many actors will feel an easy phonation.
 - ❖ Once the yawn-phonation is achieved, the SLP will instruct the actor to say words beginning with /h/ or with open-mouthed vowels, one word per yawn in the beginning, eventually four or five words on one exhalation.
 - ❖ The SLP will demonstrate the sigh phase of the exercise, that is, prolonged, easy, open-mouthed exhalation after the yawn. Then, omitting the yawn entirely, demonstrate a quick, normal, open-mouthed inhalation followed by the prolonged open-mouthed sigh.
 - ❖ The relaxed phonation of a sigh is often the best speaking pitch.

(Boone, McFarlane, & Von Berg, 2005)

- ❖ *Um-hmm*- Saying “um-hmm” is considered the voice of agreement. Often in conversation, people say “um-hmm” in an automatic “natural way.” In voice therapy, the focus may become redirecting the actor’s utterance of “um-hmm” into an easy and improved speaking voice.
 - ❖ The voice typically produced by the “um-hmm” voice is spoken at an appropriate pitch level with good facial mask resonance.
 - ❖ Saying “um-hmm” with an upward inflection often approximates the best pitch level.

(Boone, McFarlane, & Von Berg, 2005)

- ❖ *Pitch Practice Using Single Words*
 - ❖ Begin practice with producing single words in your optimal pitch range.

- ❖ On a full breath from your diaphragm, count aloud:Uh-huh one, Uh-huh two, Uh-huh three..... until 10
- ❖ This will assist you with speaking single words from your ideal pitch range.
- ❖ *Produce the words below in your pitch range*
 - ❖ Place your fingers around your lips and nose.
 - ❖ If you are in your optimal pitch range a subtle buzz should be detected.
 - ❖ Hello No Monopoly Experiment
Right Run Minnesota Refrigerator
Beautiful Happy Apartment Particular
- ❖ *Select a word and insert it into the "Uh-Huh counting pattern*
 - ❖ Right-one, Right-two, Right-three.....until 10
 - ❖ Beautiful-one, Beautiful-two, Beautiful-three.....until 10
- ❖ *Pitch Practice at the Sentence Level*
 - ❖ Practice with connected speech. Remember diaphragm breathing!
 - ❖ Select a word from above and say it in a sentence that you create.
 - ❖ For example, "I am happy to be speaking using my ideal voice." Creating your own sentences will help you keep your practice more spontaneous and simulate natural conversation.
- ❖ *Spontaneous Speech Practice*
 - ❖ Using your ideal voice and proper diaphragm breathing, produce a short story using 2-3 sentences about:
 - ❖ -A New York City cab driver and an anxious tourist
 - ❖ -A sea lion and a scuba diver
 - ❖ -China Town and a feisty lobster
 - ❖ -A lottery ticket and a cold day in winter
 - ❖ -A crooked chef and a smart FBI agent
 - ❖ Note: Notice how diaphragm breathing and speaking in your optimal pitch range generates natural projection and richer vocal tones.
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