

## CONSERVE YOUR VOICE

1. *Throat clearing, coughing, and yelling can be harmful to your voice.* Instead of throat clearing, try to cough without voicing more effort. This will help to clear your throat without making your vocal cords bang against each other. Another option is to clear your throat quietly.
2. *Practice using an easy onset of voice.* This entails a soft, even breathy onset of voice rather than a loud strong attack when initiating speech.
3. *Try to speak at a pitch level that is comfortable.* Many times, people will speak at too low a pitch when taking on an authoritative role or in teaching situations. Likewise, in tense or nervous situations, the voice may be tight and at a high pitch. Try to keep your voice somewhere in the middle of your pitch range, where you feel the least strain and the most comfort.
4. *Focus your voice in the middle of your mouth.* If you “feel” your voice in your throat or nose, it is likely that tension and strain are occurring during voicing. Concentrate on projecting your voice forward so that you “feel” the most energy in the middle of your mouth or just behind your upper front teeth. To get the sense of how this feels, try holding out “MMM” and feel where the vibrations occur. They should occur behind the upper front teeth.
5. *Use more frequent pauses for breathing purposes.* Rather than “pushing” your voice out, allow yourself to pause and get more breath in order to finish. Pushing your voice through creates additional stress and tension in the vocal cords, throat, and mouth.
6. *Talk only when necessary.* Try not to use your voice more often than necessary. This will allow your voice to rest.
7. *Use an open mouth and throat.* Think of how open your mouth and throat feel when you yawn and sigh. Practice yawning or sighing frequently and try to maintain the openness felt in the throat and mouth while talking.
8. *Try to avoid talking over background noise.* Background noise requires use of a louder voice and sometimes a different pitch of voice than you are used to. If you must talk in the presence of background noise, try to maintain close proximity to the listener (usually not further than an arm’s length away). In addition, good eye contact between listener and talker allows the listener to get cues from your lips and face during talking so that you may speak at softer levels.
9. *Avoid smoking, smoky environments, and excessive use of alcohol.* Smoke is irritating to the throat and vocal cord tissue. Alcohol will dehydrate the tissue. These changes in the vocal cord tissue will result in voice quality changes, such as hoarseness. Chronic irritation may lead to other tissue changes requiring medical or surgical treatment.
10. *Try to drink liquids frequently and humidify the air.* As much as possible, try to hydrate the tissue in the throat by using a humidifier and drinking liquids to moisten the tissue in your mouth and throat. The tissue of the vocal folds is gelatinous and easily dehydrated. If you experience frequent dryness, voice problems may arise. By contrast, recovery from many voice problems may be enhanced by increased moisture to the vocal cords.