

Example of Vocal Hygiene Program

- A. Clearing your throat or coughing habitually might damage the vocal fold tissues. Instead, try some of these substitute behaviors:**
1. Yawn to relax your throat.
 2. Swallow slowly and deliberately.
 3. Sip water, let your throat relax for a second, and then resume speaking.
 4. Use the “silent cough” technique.
 5. Hum: concentrate on vocal resonance sensations.
 6. If necessary suck on candy (not cough drops with menthol or mint).
 7. Be particularly aware of the throat-clearing habit during lecturing.
- B. Speaking loudly, yelling, cheering, or screaming might damage the vocal fold tissues. Instead:**
1. Use gestures, nonvocal sounds, or instruments to attract attention from a distance (e.g., clap, whistle, ring a bell, or blow a horn).
 2. To set up a system of nonvocal signals with students to get their attention and maintain discipline. If you must speak to students who are behaving undesirably, walk up to them and speak to them quietly (this is sometimes more effective than yelling). Apply these principles to your own children and pets.
- C. Speaking over loud noise for a long period of time can cause vocal fatigue or increased laryngeal tension. Noisy situations include classroom noise, loud music, television, parties, restaurants, cars, buses, airplanes, and so on. Instead:**
1. Try to reduce background noise during conversations (e.g. turn off loud music or television).
 2. Wait until student/audience is quiet and attentive.
 3. Choose quiet restaurants, booths, or tables in the corner.
 4. Face your conversational partner.
 5. Reduce the distance between you and your conversational partner so you can be heard without yelling.
 6. Position yourself so your face is well lighted.
 7. Over articulate.
 8. Practice your listening.
- D. Prolonged use of unconventional vocal sounds-whispering, growls, squeaks, imitating animals, or machine noises-can harm vocal fold tissues. Instead:**
1. If you must produce special vocals effects for performance, make sure you are using a technique that minimizes muscle tension and vocal abuse.
 2. Be especially aware to avoid using such unconventional sounds during oral reading to your students.
- E. If you sing, you should know that singing beyond your comfortable pitch and loudness range can irritate the vocal folds. Instead:**
1. Know your limits for pitch and loudness.
 2. Avoid forcing your voice to stay in the register beyond comfortable pitch range. Don't force your “chest voice” too high; and don't force your “head voice” high into falsetto range. Allow vocal registers to change with pitch.
 3. Avoid singing all parts if you teach choral music; use instrumental demonstrations instead.
 4. Seek professional voice training.
 5. Never sing a high note that you can't sing quietly; don't push beyond comfortable pitch in any register.

Source:

Roy, N., Gray, S.D., Simon, M., Dove, H., Cobin-Lewis, K., Stemple, J.C. (2001). An Evaluation of the Effects of Two Treatment Approaches for Teachers with Voice Disorders: A Prospective Randomized Clinical Trial. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 44, 286-296.

- F. Talking with a low pitch monotone voice and allowing vocal energy to drop so low that the voice becomes rough and gravelly (glottal fry) can be potentially harmful to your voice. Instead:**
1. Keep your voice powered by breath flow so the tone carries, varies, and rings.
 2. Try not to speak beyond the natural breath cycle by squeezing out the last few words without sufficient breath.
 3. Speak slowly, pause at natural phrase boundaries, and take another breath before running out of air.
 4. Allow pitch to vary freely and expressively; keep pitch comfortable.
- G. Holding your breath as you're planning what to say can lead to hard glottal attacks (sudden tense initiation of voice) or aggressive or low-pitched fillers such as “um” or “ah,” and should be avoided. Instead:**
1. Initiate voice gradually and easily.
 2. Keep the shoulders, upper chest, neck, and throat relaxed as you begin speaking.
 3. Use the breathing muscles and airflow to start speech phrases.
 4. Avoid tightening upper chest, shoulders, neck, or throat to push the voice out.
 5. Let your abdomen and rib cage move freely.
 6. Avoid clenching your teeth or tensing your jaw or tongue during speech
- H. Speaking extensively during strenuous physical exercise is not recommended. Instead:**
1. After aerobic exercise, wait until your breathing system can accommodate optimal voice production.
 2. Avoid loud and aggressive vocal “grunts” while exercising.
- I. Your general health can affect your voice. Maintain a healthy lifestyle and healthy environment.**
1. Do not smoke. If you smoke, see your family doctor about ways to stop smoking—seek a referral to a smoking cessation clinic. Avoid spending large amounts of time in dry, smoke-filled environments.
 2. Avoid recreational drugs.
 3. Avoid caffeinated beverages such as coffee, tea, and colas. \
 4. Monitor/reduce alcohol intake. Alcohol can have a drying effect on vocal fold tissue.
 5. Maintain a well-balanced diet.
 6. Get adequate sleep: 7 to 8 hours per night.
 7. Maintain proper humidity. A small portable vaporizer at the bedside is often helpful at night. Purchasing a room humidifier may be an option, especially if you're home or work environment is extremely dry or dust-filled. Environmental levels of humidity should be at least 30%.
 8. Maintain proper hydration. Drink 8 to 10 glasses of decaffeinated fluids per day. Water is the preferred fluid. Have it handy at all times and sip it throughout the day, especially while teaching.
 9. Some medications, including antihistamines and decongestants, can cause increased dryness of tissues, causing a dry scratchy feeling in the throat. Be aware of this and compensate with increased hydration (i.e. fluid consumption). If possible, reduce this use of such medications.
- J. Reduce your total amount of voice use.**
1. Rest your voice when you're tired or have an upper respiratory infection (i.e. cold or flu-like symptoms). Do not force your voice when it is hoarse because of cold.
 2. Rest your voice before becomes fatigued—before tightness, dryness, or hoarseness is noted. Schedule your day so that there are periods of voice rest interspersed. If you don't have to, don't schedule your classes back to back. Don't spend your lunch talking with other teachers; use that time to be quiet and rest your voice. Curtail your voice use socially.
 3. When getting involved in extracurricular activities, consider how much voice use will be required. If it is great, you may want to consider choosing another activity or becoming involved in another capacity.
 4. Change your style of teaching. Make use of audiovisual materials, desk-work, student presentations, and small group format to reduce the amount of constant talking. Make use of student teachers, teaching assistants, and volunteer parents whenever possible.

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