

How to Improve the Pitch and Quality of Your Voice: Say Hello to Vibrant Tones and Goodbye to Nasal Speech Forever!

Optimal Pitch Range

When individuals judge their voice, they are usually commenting on the quality of their pitch. The concept of pitch can be easily misunderstood. On a technical and scientific level, vocal pitch is described as how the vocal chords vibrate together to create sound waves. For a non-technical individual, pitch is often perceived as the way voice sounds. For example, the pitch is too high, low, is wavering or sounds thin or weak. Learning to speak in your optimal pitch range is important for presenting with strong, rich tones that are aesthetically pleasing for your listener.

Voice therapists describe two different types of pitch:

- **Habitual pitch** is your regular and consistent tone of voice. It is the pitch you use automatically or “habitually” for speaking, but it may not necessarily be your best vocal quality.
- **Optimal pitch** produces a rich and pure tone where the muscles of the vocal mechanism function at their best to produce an ideal quality voice with natural projection.

Speaking in your optimal pitch range would be preferred for professional speech and voice since that is where the most vibrant tones are produced.

If there is a significant gap between your habitual and optimal pitch, it is most likely due to the fact that you find it easier and more comfortable speaking with your habitual pitch range. This is the pitch level most people use automatically without ever thinking about it. Many speakers with a high, thin or nasal sounding pitch are speaking from their habitual pitch range. Learning to speak from your optimal pitch level is an easy adjustment to make and the benefits will significantly improve your voice quality and professional image.

Resonance and Voice Quality

Producing a great voice is a blend of breathing, speaking within your ideal pitch range and resonating properly. The idea of resonance seems abstract to non-voice experts, but it can be easily explained. Resonance is the amplification of speech sound waves that occurs in the cavities of your throat, mouth and nose. To simplify, resonance has to do with where the voice is “placed” by the speaker.

There Are Three Types of Resonance:

Pharyngeal Resonance

Your vocal folds are in your lower throat and this is the region where your optimal pitch is generated. Pharyngeal resonance is highly important for voice quality since proper voicing is produced in this area with the throat relaxed and ideally free from tension.

Oral Resonance

This type of resonance places the voice in the mouth cavity. Any movement, large or small, with the lips, cheeks, tongue, jaw or wall of the throat will affect the resonance by shaping the sound waves. If you mumble or do not move your articulators fully, it will not be possible for the sound waves to resonate as well in your oral cavity. To have a professional sounding voice, as well as crisp articulation, correct movements of the speech articulators are critical. Good speech resonates from the pharyngeal and oral cavity. If your speech resonates from your nasal cavity or you don't have complete follow-through with your speech articulators, (lips, jaw and tongue) you may not fully achieve the best oral resonance and strong voice qualities.

Nasal Resonance

This type of resonance is when the voice sounds as if it is being projected through the nose, creating a tone quality that is nasal, high in pitch or sounds like "whining." When the tone is placed too high in these cavities the result is a nasal sounding voice. A speaker can be between "two parallels" where it is not 100% nasal but is above the pharyngeal and oral resonance range. This could be described as having some "nasality." Many speakers fall into this category.

Placing your voice properly in your pharyngeal and oral cavities is key for a rich, robust voice with natural projection and ideal tone quality. This can be achieved with awareness, proper diaphragm breathing, voicing at your optimal pitch range and placing your voice correctly in your pharyngeal and oral cavities for ideal vocal resonance.

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