

How to Test for Nasal Speech

First, let's define what nasal speech is. The professional term is Nasal Resonance. This type of resonance is when the voice sounds as if it were being projected through the nose, creating a tone quality that is nasal or 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 correctly in your pharyngeal and oral cavities is important for a rich, robust voice with natural projection and ideal voice quality. This can be achieved with good movement with your speech articulators, proper diaphragm breathing, voicing from your optimal pitch range, and thinking of your speech coming from your chest area.

Three American Speech Sounds Produced in the Nasal Cavity

There are three American speech sounds that resonate in your nasal cavity. They are /m/, /n/ and /ng/ as in "song" or "working." When these sounds are produced, sound waves vibrate in your nasal cavity, producing a buzzing vibration in the bridge of your nose that can be felt with your fingertips. This is unavoidable and will always happen with these sounds.

Try It

Place your fingers on the bridge of your nose. Say "mom," "name" and "song." You should have felt a buzzing vibration in the bridge of your nose. You should *not* feel a buzz with all other *non-nasal* sounds. If you feel a buzz in your nasal cavity with non-nasal speech sounds, too much nasal resonance is being used. You would have a better voice and leadership image if you dropped your voice into your lower throat.

Simple Test for Nasal Speech

Place your fingers on the middle portion of the bridge of your nose and say the following words:

Sour Hot sauce Cat Book Bracelet Briefcase Tiger

You should *not* have felt a buzzing vibration because these words do not contain the sounds that resonate in your nasal cavity. If you felt a buzz, then your voice was placed too high in your nasal cavity, creating nasal resonance. Lower your voice by speaking in your optimal pitch range, and speak from your oral and pharyngeal resonating cavities.

Try these phrases. Again, you should *not* feel a buzz in the bridge of your nose.

- It was sour.
- I rode the bike.
- Please pass the hot sauce.

- The stove is hot.
- Put your briefcase here.

CAUTION: Be careful with words that contain the vowel sound /a/ as in “cat” and /aw/ as in “awful.” These sounds can easily be projected up into your nasal cavity, creating nasal-sounding speech, because the jaw was not lowered enough and oral resonance could not be obtained.

Practice saying the words below that focus on the /a/ and /aw/ vowel sounds. If you feel a buzz from your nasal cavity, your speech and voice are mainly resonating in your nasal cavity. Lower your voice placement in your pharyngeal and oral cavities to avoid nasal resonance. Lowering your jaw appropriately for the sounds and speaking with good range of motion with your speech articulators will help you place your voice more in the oral cavity, farther from your nasal cavity.

Pass	Laugh	Raft	Apple	Taffy	Have	Cash
Awful	Follow	Off	Bought	Coffee	Officer	Honest

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