

# Notes to Talking Newspaper Readers

## Introduction

Reading aloud is an art form and is distinct from silent reading. When we read to ourselves our brains recognise and interpret the words on the page. When we read aloud to others, that process is extended to include the listeners and to involve them in the author's words by interpreting them in the most meaningful way.

In speaking before a live audience, important components are body language and facial expression. On radio we have to rely on voice alone and to do this successfully we employ certain techniques which can be used so skilfully as to be unnoticed by those who are listening. The old adage of describing the successful hostess as being "like a duck; smooth and calm on the surface but paddling like mad underneath" is very apt here if we substitute "reader" for "hostess".

But let's look at reading aloud in the context of Talking Newspapers.

Before beginning to read, take a minute or two to relax and flex the reading muscles with a few breathing and speech exercises.

*Sit up in your chair in an easy position, then lean forward with knees slightly apart. Place your elbows on your knees and put your chin on your clasped hands. As you breathe in and fill your lungs, you will feel your lower back expanding. Hold this for several seconds then breathe out slowly on a hiss. Repeat this several times.*

*Now open the back of the throat by yawning secretly (Imagine you are listening to a boring speech!). Slowly breathe out.*

Another good way to relax and take the strain out of the day takes only a few minutes but can be quite refreshing...

1. *Sit easy on your chair, back straight without straining, hands clasped lightly on your lap.*
2. *Close your eyes and listen to any sounds OUTSIDE the room.*
3. *Now listen to any sound INSIDE the room.*
4. *Now listen to your inner self, your heartbeat, your breathing, your very being.*

*Try to isolate the sounds in each of these exercises so that you are focusing on one sound alone.*

**SMILE!** This relaxes the muscles of the face and also lifts the spirit!

Now try to imagine your audience; have them in your mind's eye. Who are they, what age are they, what are they doing, how are they dressed? Are they sitting down listening intently or are you simply a background noise to them? Over the weeks, you might even 'adopt' a particular listener or a group who have come together to hear Talking Newspapers. This will help introduce a more intimate, conversational tone to your reading.

Very quickly, look over the article. Is it serious/ humorous/ didactic/ neutral? Does it have a twist in the tail? (Foreknowledge will prepare you to deal with this.) Where are the punctuation marks? Are the sentences long or short and will you need a bigger breath to cope? Your reaction to all these points will signal the way in which you approach the piece. It may seem a lot to do but in fact it can be done in seconds and a seasoned reader will be able to take them all in at a glance.

## Phrasing

This is probably the most essential tool. Words are grouped together to bring out the meaning and although punctuation helps, particularly the full stop, it mustn't be regarded as a rule. Sometimes of course, there are so few commas in the article that readers have to sort them out themselves.

### Exercise: -

Read through this passage, marking the phrases, then read it aloud paying attention to your marked phrasing. **Listen to yourself as you read.** You may want to make changes.

*The English Speaking Board has always loved the seemingly rejected and the less able as well as the gifted and exceptional and has proved itself capable of picking up those who find themselves for one reason or another sidelined by our educational system.*

## Pauses

These can be breath pauses of varying length, depending on the surge and meaning of the passage but there are other ways of using pause to good effect. Often this does not require a breath pause but only a slight hold of the voice to give prominence to a certain word or words (indicated by < > in the examples below).

1. Before a title: *The famous book < > Treasure Island is still enjoyed by children and adults alike.*
2. Before a number: *He sold < > five hundred tickets in the first hour.*
3. Before a quotation: *Elma Mitchell once wrote, < > "Words can seriously affect your heart"*

## Inflection and Pitch

Closely allied to the pause, are pitch and inflection, both essential to avoid monotony. "Pitch" is the degree of sound. "Inflection" is the modulation or tune of the voice as it moves from one pitch to another. Generally speaking, a falling inflection is used at the end of a sentence to denote conclusion. A bigger change of pitch is necessary at the beginning of a new paragraph to denote a new thought, or development of one.

### Exercise: -

**Say the word 'Yes' using inflection to denote:-**

1. *Agreement*
2. *Uncertainty*
3. *Delight*

## **Say the word 'No' using inflection to denote:-**

1. *Emphatic disagreement*
2. *Uncertainty*
3. *Fear*

You may want to use a double, rising and falling inflection.

## **Emphasis/Stress**

Stress on key words in a sentence brings clarity to the meaning and we use it daily in communication. For instance, by changing the word we stress in the following simple sentence we can very easily change the whole message.

### **Exercise: -**

Read through the sentence 5 times, varying the stress according to **a, b, c, d** and **e**.

***Elizabeth is driving north to-day.***

- a. *not Jane*
- b. *it is true*
- c. *not coming by train*
- d. *not going south*
- e. *not next week.*

## **Tone Colouring**

The mood and atmosphere of the passage determines the tone colouring - serious, humorous, solemn, dictatorial, light-hearted, dramatic, or reflective.

### **Exercise: -**

Read through the sentence four times, showing the different emotions according to **1 - 4**.

***Elizabeth is driving north to-day.***

1. *Calm and unemotional piece of news*
2. *Happiness*
3. *Anger*
4. *Fear*

## Volume

You do not have to worry about vocal projection reaching to the back of the studio but be careful not to allow the voice to disappear at the end of the sentence. Be sure that you have adequate supply of breath to take you to the last word.

## Pace

When we cannot see the speaker, we concentrate on the voice we hear, and so one can increase the pace a little when broadcasting. Variety of pace too will reflect varying moods of the passage. We tend to speak more quickly when we are conveying a happy occasion or event and our pace slows down when the mood is serious or sad.

## Practice

Finally, as in all things, practice makes perfect. Not only is it a good idea to listen to your voice on tape but also train yourself to be more aware of what your voice is doing in ordinary conversation. If you don't have a child of your own, then try delighting a niece, nephew or grandchild by reading to them. Not only will this give you practice in using your voice in different ways but you will be opening new horizons to your young listeners.

Another way to exercise the voice is to read poetry aloud - it can also be highly enjoyable.

Exercise: -

### ***Take a simple poem or rhyme:***

1. *Speak it loud*
2. *Speak it soft*
3. *Speak it posh*
4. *Speak it "common"*

Speak it in as many different ways as you can but as you speak, **listen to what your voice is doing**. Without realising it, you will have added immeasurably to your ability to interest and captivate as you bring the news to your listeners.