

VOCAL VARIETY

**A guide to making speeches sound
better**



INVICTUS

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Imagine yourself getting excited to attend a conference that promises to inspire and uplift you. But when you get there, all you can hear is a keynote speaker rambling about her life. You're set back by her **monotonous tone, lack of expression, and null excitement**. It's as if you're listening to someone read a boring storybook. As you look around, you notice that the rest of the attendees are either constantly checking their phones or dozing off. What a waste, right?

A few months later, you're at your office's annual general meeting, with a small number of people. Interested to know more about the company's performance, you seat yourself at the front rows. Few minutes into the speech, you notice that the CEO has irked the attendees with his **ear-splitting voice** compensating for the lack of a mic. You make up your mind to join the back rows afterward and think of how great the speech would've been if only the CEO could've lowered his voice.

Both of these instances point out the major factors determining the effectiveness of a public speaker- the delivery method of their content. You don't need to have a great voice to become a prolific speaker. Although it is an added advantage, the way you use your **vocal variety** and master it keeps you on the top of the game. Accompanied by other non-verbal cues like body language, gestures, facial expression, etc., would take your presentation to greater heights.



WHAT IS VOCAL VARIETY?

Vocal variety is the changes in one's voice through the speed and tone during a speech's delivery. Vocal variety helps keep the audience **engaged** and clues them in the meaning, feelings, or emphasis.

We can express vocal variety in many different ways; the widely used tips for achieving the right vocal variety are:

Check Your Body Posture

Body posture plays a vital role in determining your voice. When you slouch, it becomes hard for the air to flow freely through your lungs and vocal cords. Therefore, you should **keep your head straight** and **shoulders back** for your voice's maximum control. If possible, stand up while giving your speech and make sure your body is not too rigid. Make sure to keep your knees slightly flexed for natural movement.

Balance the rate at which you speak

You don't want to speak too fast in a way your audience doesn't understand what you are saying. Likewise, if you speak too slow, you will lose your listeners' interest. It is best to balance the rate while speaking. For instance, you may move quickly through some of the sentences and slow down to emphasize vital information. This helps **gather the audience's attention** and **generate interest**.

Volume

Volume directly corresponds with your audience's **ability to listen to you**, and the **level of attention** they give to you. Speaking too softly for a long time might annoy the listeners, and talking too loud might make them uncomfortable. You should vary your volume based on the setting and content of your speech. For example, if you want to convey that you are surprised, happy, or angry, increasing your volume would be wise. However, if it's a secret, an embarrassing issue, or a sad topic, you may want to lower your volume.

Vary your pitch

Like a musical scale, your voice should have a **mixture of both high and low pitch**. If you speak in a monotone voice, it will put your listeners to sleep. Similarly, if you include only high pitch, your listeners might immediately want to cover their ears. If you ask how to vary your pitch, well, it depends on your content too. You should have a high pitch when expressing excitement, while a low pitch should show sadness or thoughtfulness.

Maintain the right voice quality

Your voice should be **natural** and not made up. It should convey confidence in whatever you are speaking to build trust. It should also be **friendly, enjoyable, and pleasant to the ears**. The audience would not want to hear a rude or unfriendly voice. If you relax before your speech, you will achieve the right voice quality that the audience wants to hear.

EXTRA TIPS



Take Pauses

While it is natural to take pauses when you don't know what to speak next, the right pause will create an impact on your vocal variety. Before an important statement, a pause will give a hint that you are about to say something important. Pauses are also an opportunity for you to **breathe in** between your speeches. But it should not look like you forgot what to say next.

Practice more often

Before your final speech, you should practice and note where you might need to improve. You can even **record yourself speaking** and listen to it to see places where you can vary the pitch, volume, and voice quality. Check where you need pauses or where you need to convey a different emotion. If you practice more often, you will become **comfortable**, and **confidence** will lead to a better vocal variety.

**VOICE FOR VIVACIOUS PERFORMANCE:
SOUND RIGHT TO MAKE YOUR SPEECH
COME ALIVE**