

When it comes to delivering a presentation, speech or high-stakes conversation, our best friend is preparation.

To communicate persuasively (i.e. use the voice and body effectively), we want to achieve a state of release – relaxed and energised. Preparation and warming up are the most powerful tools we have to help us get there.

The best order for warming up is: BREATH, BODY, SOUND, TEXT

10-MINUTE WARM UP

Breath exercises:

→ **Spinal roll** – from a standing position slowly roll down as you breathe out, vertebra by vertebra. Relax your neck, relax your arms and let your head hang. As you begin to breathe in, slowly stack the spine back up, rolling upwards vertebra by vertebra back to standing.

→ **Smell the flower** – imagine smelling something you like, an organic and familiar stimulus allows for pleasurable and easy deep breathing.

Body exercises:

→ **Reach for a peach/pick a potato** – imagine that there is some delicious fruit in a tree above you. Using a similar energy to a morning yawn, reach for this fruit with energy shooting out of your fingertips. Now pick up a potato with the same energy running through your legs and toes.

→ **Shoulder circles** – imagine you have pencils extending from your shoulders. Slowly draw small circles with your shoulders. Repeat the exercise in the opposite direction.

→ **Jaw massage** – place your fingers on your jaw hinge (where it connects to the skull in front of your ears). Open and close your mouth to feel your jaw hinge. Gently and slowly massage this spot.

Sound exercises:

Gently hum on 'm', 'n', 'ng' – working towards feeling the maximum amount of vibration on your mouth, lips and tip of your tongue.

Text exercises:

Experiment with different resonances (body vibrations: head, then nose, then chest) saying a tongue twister aloud.

Example: *Give papa a cup of proper coffee in a copper coffee cup.*

Read a tongue twister with your tongue poking into the inside of the left cheek, then right cheek. Then speak the tongue twister with your tongue poking out, then while holding it with your fingers.

Now try saying the tongue twister again normally, noticing how agile and spacious your mouth feels.

1. The lion's yawn: *to create space for the voice*

Yawn and think about opening your mouth wide, also allowing the teeth to show, as if you're going to smile.

This will open the throat and lift the soft palate to make space for your voice.

2. Centre the breath: *to calm the nerves*

Place your hands on your naval and feel your belly move as you breathe. The in-breath moves your belly out into your hands; the out-breath allows the belly to move back towards the spine.

Your shoulders and chest remain relaxed to prevent top chest breathing.

3. Humming: *to warm up and focus the voice*

Sigh out on a gentle hum and feel the vibrations on the lips – this is your resonance!

Gently hum a favourite tune or siren through your range up and down to massage the vocal folds.

4. Lip and tongue trills: *to connect the breath to the voice*

Blow through your lips gently and focus on keeping a steady stream of quiet sound – not loud, nor too high or low in pitch. Repeat, gliding up and down your range.

Sigh out on a trilled 'r' in an easy pleasurable way. Repeat the tongue trill moving up and down your range.

5. Wake up the articulators: *to clarify speech and free the voice*

Choose a piece of text that is challenging for its articulation or language. Speak the sentence aloud.

Repeat with the tongue resting out of the mouth on the lower lip (or you can hold the tip of your tongue with your thumb and forefinger) and speak the sentence again as clearly as possible.

Repeat with the tongue relaxed back in the mouth and notice how, having stretched the tongue (which can often act like a plug blocking the throat) and freed the airways, the articulators may work with greater ease.

1. Establishing neutral: *to create alignment and balance*

Stand with your feet hip-width apart and release your arms by your side, rolling out your shoulders. Focus your eyes on the horizon. Allow your head to release upwards as if there was a string attached to the crown of your head drawing you upwards. Practice the same in a seated position.

2. Spinal roll: *to release tension*

Stand with your feet parallel, shoulder-width apart. Release your head forward onto your chest. Allow the weight of your head to travel you down your spine, releasing vertebra by vertebra. Unlock the knees. Hang by your tailbone and check the neck is free. Slowly roll back up through your spine and allow your head to float up into a balanced position.

3. Cape, crown, headlight: *to enhance presence*

Imagine the colour, fabric, and weight of your cape. Consider the appearance of your crown and place it gently on your head. Be aware of your eyeline resting on the horizon. Imagine the headlight in your chest as its bright light fills the room. Stand and walk with this new awareness.

4. Energy levels: *to give you choice to build rapport*

Choose to either match or complement your energy level with those you are in communication with.

Low Casual Neutral Alert High

5. Gestures: *to align with your message*

Gesture zones mirror the energy levels above. 'Safe Harbour' is a great neutral place that is easy to gesture from.

6. Eye contact: *to build connection*

Use the opportunity to connect with your audience rather than looking through them, over their heads or skimming across faces with your eyes. Around three seconds of eye contact allows you to really connect with each person.

GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES

*The who, where, when, what,
why and how*

By allowing the given circumstances to guide us, we can adapt the content, structure and delivery of our messages, refining our communications to ensure the most successful outcome.

AWARENESS = CHOICE

When preparing for any important interaction or presentation, answer the following questions:

WHO is involved?

Who are your audience members?

What are their needs, their expectations and experience?

WHERE will the interaction or presentation take place?

Is the presentation taking place on your turf or theirs?

Will it be public or private?

WHEN will the interaction or presentation occur?

At what time of day/night is your presentation taking place?

How might you, or your audience, feel at the time the presentation is to take place?

WHAT do you want the other person or the audience to DO?

(objective)

Ask: 'To get the audience to

WHY do you want the audience to do this?

(motivation)

Ask: 'To get the audience to.....so that.....'

HOW are you going to do it?

(active verb)

What is your tactic?

To welcome

To incite

To alert

To charm

To direct

To soothe

To entice

To amuse

To entertain

To applaud

To challenge

To calm

To convince

To uplift

To congratulate

To enthuse

To excite

To entrust

To warm

To confide

To celebrate