



Voice Preservation

This information may be used as a guide when discussing medical or health changes that affect an individual's ability to speak. Technology and anecdotal research have led to the development of several strategies that will help an individual retain access to their natural speaking voice (or an approximation of it) despite physical limitations that may prevent verbal communication.

The decision whether to voice/message/story bank and how to go about doing so is personal. It is possible that a person does a combination of all three methods. Any type of 'banking' allows the user to secure their natural speaking voice if they need or choose to use augmentative communication. We consider this an 'insurance plan' for the voice.

While there are many ways to preserve your voice, it is not crucial to do so. Modern technologies allow for excellent voice output in an increasing number of devices (tablets, specialized augmentative communication devices and computer software) and in a number of accents and languages. The most important thing is to know the options so that you may make an informed choice about your future communication.

VOICE BANKING

Voice Banking is a process of using recordings of a person's speech to create a "synthetic voice"; akin to *Siri* and *Alexa* which are synthetic versions of a real person's voice. Recordings can be gathered from videos/audio files, or can be recorded with the express purpose of voice banking using a digital recorder or app (i.e. Voice Memos on iDevices).

From there, the recordings are processed using specialized software that produces a digital version of the person's voice (a "voice clone"). The generated voice can then be used for text-to-speech or to generate novel messages on a variety of communication apps and software.

Considerations:

- The resulting voice often shares qualities of the person's voice but may not be an exact replica
- Total amount of audio recordings (in minutes) often result in a better quality voice (range of 1 minute to 60 minutes)
- Results are best if recordings are taken prior to speech changes
- Family members or friends can "donate" their own voice recordings, if the person needing the banked voice does not have audio recordings of themselves and cannot create them due to speech changes
- In most cases, conversational-style speech samplings (speech containing natural ups and downs) provide the best results



MESSAGE BANKING

Message Banking is the process of using a digital recorder (or voice recorder on a tablet/phone), to record and store words, phrases, sentences and personally meaningful expressions in one's natural speaking voice while it is still intact. For example:

- 1) Greetings e.g., What you say in the morning, or upon waking up
- 2) Needs and comfort e.g., the things you may ask for help with
- 3) Health/medical e.g., describing pain
- 4) Food/drink e.g., food preferences
- 5) Conversation/chat e.g., questions you may want to ask your grandkids, your spouse etc.
- 6) Entertainment needs or topics e.g., getting assistance to turn on the TV or sign-in to Facebook
- 7) Expressing emotions, concern, or negation e.g., telling someone you'd rather talk another time
- 8) Specific personal messages, e.g., how you say goodnight to your daughter
- 9) Money/legal matters e.g., asking if the bills have been paid

The messages can later be used in a variety of augmentative communication technologies by linking the audio file with a button or using the recordings to create a voice (like in Voice Banking). This will allow the user to 'retrieve' a message and speak it in one's own voice but does not allow for the creation of novel messages by spelling.

Clients report that there is a significant difference between an artificial voice saying personal phrases like 'I love you' versus hearing their own voice saying, 'I love you'. Messages that are more personal/emotional should take priority if an individual chooses to record only a small set of recordings.

STORY BANKING

Like message banking, either a digital recorder or recording software is used to record favourite stories. These personal, legacy stories are then available for sharing with others later, when speech has become more difficult. For example:

- 1) The way things were growing up
- 2) Funny family memories
- 3) Foolish mistakes you made and mischief with friends
- 4) Historical/political experiences you've witnessed
- 5) Major milestones- schooling, jobs, moves, marriage, children
- 6) Romance stories- how you met your spouse or partner, how you became engaged to be married, joys and troubles you faced in the relationship, inside jokes you share
- 7) Accidents/injuries or near accidents/injuries
- 8) Specialized knowledge and skills e.g., how to fish, how to make a quilt, how to bake the best bread
- 9) Children's stories/anecdotes, rhymes and folk tales



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The recordings can be loaded into a communication device or onto a computer then retrieved at desired times. Everybody has stories to tell- memorable experiences, specialized knowledge, and funny jokes they love to share. In many ways, it is story-telling that provides social closeness and builds relationships. Recorded stories serve as a precious keepsake that can be passed down to future generations.

Detailed information sheets for each process, including screen shots, are available from your CAYA team.