

# Unit 103: Voice and the Actor

Unit code:	A/502/5367
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

## ● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to enable learners to devise and implement their own unique vocal development programme and apply their technique to a range of texts in class and in performance.

## ● Unit introduction

Voice classes and company vocal warm-ups play a vital role in keeping an actor's voice in good condition and ready to meet the demands of performance. However, every voice is different and unique to the actor: if actors are to maximise the potential of their voice they must be prepared to consider more deeply the characteristics of their own unique instruments. Only then will they discover where their strengths lie and which aspects of their voice would benefit from further development.

This unit encourages learners to reflect on the unique quality of sound they produce and having done so, create an individual vocal development programme that aims to build upon their vocal strengths and improve areas of weak technique. This does not mean that more generic voice classes should not be delivered as part of this unit. On the contrary, it is of vital importance that learners participate in regular voice classes featuring breathing and articulation exercises and the like, so that **all** of the muscles used in voice production are exercised regularly and are in peak condition; an analogy may be drawn between an actor preparing for a performance and an athlete preparing for a sporting event.

Throughout this unit learners should experiment with a wide variety of challenging texts which should be performed as part of in-class assessments and public performances. Material can be drawn and created from almost any source. Contemporary and classical plays are obvious sources of suitable texts but screen plays, radio plays, poetry, novels, children's stories, newspapers, magazines, instruction manuals, recipes, historical documents, science books, travel guides or any text that can be spoken should be considered for inclusion as part of this unit. There are no limits to how these texts may be performed. In addition to acting in plays, learners may also be assessed as they perform in radio dramas, themed anthologies of poetry and prose and performance installations; in which they can create and perform live soundscapes and narration as part of the performance.

This unit will benefit learners by helping them to acquire a free, flexible and responsive voice that communicates the meaning and the music of the widest possible range of material.

## ● Learning outcomes

### On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know how to devise a vocal development programme in response to own needs
- 2 Be able to complete a vocal development programme
- 3 Be able to demonstrate a command of vocal technique in response to material
- 4 Be able to demonstrate vocal technique in performance.

# Unit content

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## 1 Know how to devise a vocal development programme in response to own needs

*Vocal processes:* respiration, breath control, breath capacity; phonation; articulation; resonance

*Other factors:* posture; tension; body awareness; facial relaxation; body relaxation

*Vocal health:* warming-up; relaxation; dietary considerations; tension; posture; smoking; oral piercings, rest

*Technique:* tone; pace; pitch; pause; projection; inflection; modulation; intonation; articulation; resonance; dynamics; accent; alliteration; assonance

*Specialist techniques:* eg Alexander technique, yoga

*Planning:* target setting; monitoring/recording progress and evaluating effectiveness; structure

## 2 Be able to complete a vocal development programme

*Commitment to the programme:* time management; meeting targets; monitoring/recording progress and evaluating effectiveness

## 3 Be able to demonstrate a command of vocal technique in response to material

*Vocal technique:* posture; body awareness; breath control; breath capacity; facial relaxation; body relaxation; tone; pace; pitch; pause; projection; inflection; modulation; intonation; articulation; resonance; dynamics; accent; alliteration; assonance; sight/cold reading

*Performance:* characterisation; focus; concentration; monologue; duologue; scene

*Nature of performance:* live eg theatrical production, storytelling, concert; recorded eg film, television, radio

*Material:* eg published play scripts (classic and modern); original play scripts; poems; non-dramatic prose; story

## 4 Be able to demonstrate vocal technique in performance

*Vocal technique:* posture; body awareness; breath control; breath capacity; breath control; facial relaxation; body relaxation; tone; pace; pitch; pause; projection; inflection; modulation; intonation; articulation; resonance; dynamics; accent; alliteration; assonance

*Performance:* characterisation; focus; concentration; monologue; duologue; scene, communication with audience

*Nature of performance:* live eg theatrical production, storytelling, concert; recorded eg film, television, radio

*Material:* eg published play scripts (classic and modern); original play scripts; poems; non-dramatic prose; story

## Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
<b>P1</b> identify own vocal characteristics and plan an individual vocal development programme [IE, CT, RL]	<b>M1</b> describe own vocal characteristics in some detail and plan a carefully considered individual vocal development programme	<b>D1</b> analyse own vocal characteristics and plan a carefully considered and well structured individual vocal development programme
<b>P2</b> carry out an individual vocal development programme and comment on progress made [RL, SM]	<b>M2</b> carry out an individual vocal development programme with commitment and reflect, in detail, on progress made	<b>D2</b> carry out an individual vocal development programme with full commitment and analyse progress made
<b>P3</b> demonstrate application of vocal technique in response to different performance styles [IE, CT, RL, SM]	<b>M3</b> demonstrate a considered application of vocal technique in response to different performance styles	<b>D3</b> demonstrate a considered, wholly appropriate and effective application of vocal technique in response to a range of material requiring different performance styles
<b>P4</b> apply competent vocal technique in performance. [RL, TW, SM]	<b>M4</b> apply vocal technique in performance with confidence and commitment.	<b>D4</b> apply vocal technique in performance, with energy and imagination.

**PLTS:** This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers CT – creative thinkers	RL – reflective learners TW – team workers	SM – self-managers EP – effective participators
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# Essential guidance for tutors

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## Delivery

As part of this unit learners are required to identify their own vocal characteristics, It is important that they are given an opportunity to build a vocabulary of suitable terms in order to be able to do so. By watching and listening to actors, their peers and anyone else they encounter it is possible to instigate discussions about the quality of voice that different people produce. Through these discussions learners will begin to understand how vocal characteristics can be described and eventually they will be able to discuss their own voices and identify their own vocal characteristics. Learners should be encouraged to formulate an opinion of how others hear their voices. They should be encouraged to discuss their voice with their peers and with other tutors who may have directed them or worked closely with them.

Having undertaken some analysis of their voices learners should begin to formulate a Vocal Development Programme with the aim of building upon their vocal strengths and improving areas of weak technique. Although at the outset the Vocal Development Programme may include little more than the learner's analysis of their vocal characteristics, a set of targets for improvement and a collection of vocal exercises; it should eventually encompass all aspects of their voice work. The Vocal Development Programme should be continually responsive to learners' needs. As progress is made in some areas new or additional targets may be established and as learners encounter more challenging texts or unfamiliar styles of performance the Vocal Development Programme should be adapted/updated to suit. The Vocal Development Programme should evolve into a portfolio of material that includes:

- learners description of own vocal characteristics
- details of exercises/activities undertaken both in class and in own time
- regular analysis of progress made
- all material/texts encountered throughout the unit
- details of all performances (in class and public)
- details of other relevant assessments/links to other units
- bibliography.

Learners should carry out the Vocal Development Programme throughout the duration of the unit. Interim assessment deadlines should be given so that feedback and an indication of current progress (with an interim grade possibly) may be given. This may be done termly or half-termly or to coincide with performances or other relevant assessments. For example, Vocal Development Programme (Part 1) is launched in the first term, Vocal Development Programme (Part 2) in the second term etc.

It is of vital importance that at no point throughout this unit should any emphasis be placed on what is 'wrong' with a learner's voice as this only reduces confidence and the ability of the learner to free his/her voice. Tutors and learners should only be concerned with maximising the potential of the voice in a performance context so that effective communication with an audience is maintained.

Learners should be challenged with a wide variety of material demanding a number of different performance styles. 'In class' assessments should feature carefully prepared (not every piece need be learnt) extracts from almost any text that can be spoken. These may be presented as monologues, duologues or as whole group performances. A high quality recording device (such as a Minidisc or hard disc recorder along with a good quality microphone, microphone stand and popping shield) can provide excellent evidence for assessment and can help learners and tutors identify areas for improvement. Poor quality voice recordings are of little or no value and as a diagnostic tool can do more harm than good. Ideally, and in addition to classroom based assessments, each learner's voice should be assessed in at least one significant performance opportunity, perhaps as part of an integrated assignment where other units such as *Applying Acting Styles*, *Contemporary Theatre Performance* or *Classical Theatre Performance* are also being assessed.

## Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to unit and structure of the programme – whole class.
Identifying and describing own and others' vocal characteristics. Use of video and audio recordings to see and listen to how actors use their voices. Introduce and develop a vocabulary of terms that can be used to describe the quality of sound produced. 'Speed Voice Dating' whole-group exercise, learners in pairs have one minute each to describe their partner's voice before moving on to the next person (notes should be taken and the exercise should be discussed within the group) – not assessed – whole class.
<p><b>Assignment 1: My Vocal Development Programme (P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment launch/research sources and methods.</li> </ul> <p>Learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify own vocal characteristics</li> <li>• plan a vocal development programme</li> <li>• carry out the vocal development programme.</li> </ul> <p>The Vocal Development Programme should be a portfolio of material that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learners description of own vocal characteristics</li> <li>• details of exercises/activities undertaken both in class and in own time</li> <li>• regular analysis of progress made</li> <li>• all material/texts encountered throughout the unit</li> <li>• details of all performances (in class and public)</li> <li>• details of other relevant assessments/links to other units</li> <li>• bibliography.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assignment 2: The Voice Showreel (P3, M3, D3)</b></p> <p>Individual and pairs – learners perform and record a range of material (at least four different styles):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assignment launch/discussion of suitable material.</li> </ul> <p>Learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• select suitable material and rehearse performance – individually/in pairs</li> <li>• final preparation, performance and recording of extracts – individually/in pairs.</li> </ul>

## Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

### Assignment 3: The Voice in Performance (P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4)

The learner's voice should be assessed in a performance context as part of at least one other assignment. Ideally criteria 3 and 4 should be integrated into another performance based assignment. Consideration should be given to preparing the voice for performance with warm-ups, vocal characterisation, use of pitch, pace, dynamics, etc.

## Assessment

Learning outcome 1 can be assessed through the submission of a portfolio of evidence that makes up a Vocal Development Programme. It is essential that learners complete an initial assessment of their own vocal characteristics before they establish a programme of vocal development as only then will learners be able to devise a programme of exercises and activities that are truly responsive to their needs. Learners should be encouraged to develop all aspects of voice production whilst paying particular attention to areas of weak technique. It is expected that vocal and physical exercises will feature heavily in the Vocal Development Programme but references to other activities such as yoga, Alexander technique and diet (and stopping smoking could also be included if relevant). Assignments must be structured carefully so that the contents of the Vocal Development Programme are able to evolve as the learners' needs alter throughout the duration of the unit.

Learning outcome 2 can also be assessed through the submission of a portfolio of evidence that makes up a Vocal Development Programme. Tutors, through their assignment design and interventions should find ways to support learners as they carry out their Vocal Development Programme. It is strongly suggested that a number of interim deadlines are established at the outset so that learners, having submitted their work, can make amendments and additions etc. By establishing interim deadlines for submission tutors will also have an opportunity to provide valuable feedback as the unit progresses. If the Vocal Development Programme is divided into parts (to run congruently with terms or major performance opportunities) it is suggested that these components are collated at the end of the unit to provide one substantial, over-arching record of the work undertaken.

Evidence for learning outcome 3 can take the form of video and/or audio recordings and tutor observations. To help tutors gain an insight in to the learners' preparation it may also be useful for learners to submit 'actors notes' and copies of texts that have been annotated. Learners should be exposed to a wide range of material from a variety of sources which can be performed as part of 'in class' readings, large-scale productions, recorded and played back 'in-class' or broadcast to a wider audience. Any text which can be spoken could potentially be used as part of this unit and learners will therefore need to be prepared to experiment and seek out opportunities in the material they engage with.

Learning outcome 4 requires learners to engage with an audience and evidence of this can take the form of video and/or audio recordings and tutor observations. It may be appropriate, desirable even, for learners to be assessed as part of larger integrated assignments/performance projects where a number of other units are also being assessed.

NB: When applying the grading criteria tutors should follow the advice given below. Please note that the examples of evidence given here are indicative only.

For P1, learners will have made a genuine if somewhat superficial attempt to identify their own vocal characteristics and will have planned an individual vocal development programme designed to build upon their own vocal strengths and improve areas of weak technique. For P2, learners will have provided some evidence that they have carried out an individual vocal development programme and they will have made some comments regarding their progress throughout. For P3, learners will demonstrate the application of vocal technique in response to a range ie at least three examples of material requiring different performance styles but responses to texts at pass level will lack imagination and thought. Vocal technique in performance will be applied in a manner that is generally appropriate to the material, audience and, where applicable, venue, however the overall vocal performance may occasionally lack confidence and commitment (P4).

Merit-level learners will be able to describe their own vocal characteristics in some detail and will have planned an individual vocal development programme designed to build upon their own vocal strengths and improve areas of weak technique (M1). Merit-level learners will have carried out an individual vocal development programme with some commitment and they will have reflected in detail on their progress throughout. It will be evident from their comments that they will have engaged positively with the exercises and activities that make up the vocal development programme (M2). Merit-level learners will demonstrate a considered application of vocal technique in response to a range ie at least three examples of material requiring different performance styles. Evidence presented by the learner will enable tutors to gain an insight into learners' thoughts on preparing the texts for performance (M3). Vocal technique in performance will be applied in a manner that is appropriate to the material, audience and, where applicable, venue. Performances will be confident and committed (M4). Distinction level learners will be able to analyse their own vocal characteristics in detail and will have planned a carefully considered and well structured individual vocal development programme designed to build on their own vocal strengths and improve areas of weak technique.

Distinction-level learners will be able adapt their vocal development programme in response to their own changing needs (D1). Distinction-level learners will have carried out an individual vocal development programme with full commitment and they will have analysed their progress throughout. It will be evident from their comments that they will have fully engaged in the exercises and activities that make up the vocal development programme (D2). Distinction-level learners will demonstrate a considered, wholly appropriate and effective application of vocal technique in response to a range ie at least three examples of material requiring different performance styles. Evidence presented by learners will enable tutors to gain a detailed insight into learners' thoughts on preparing the texts for performance (D3). Vocal technique in performance will be applied in a manner that is wholly appropriate to the material, audience and, where applicable, venue. Learners will maintain communication with the audience at all times in performances that are consistently confident, committed, energised and demonstrate an imaginative engagement with the text (D4).

## Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2	My Vocal Development Programme	Learners as actors putting together a CV to accompany their latest 'showreel' describe their vocal characteristics. In doing so they come to the realisation that more opportunities for employment would be open to them if they could improve some aspects of their voice work.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>learners' description of own vocal characteristics</li> <li>details of exercises/ activities undertaken both in class and in own time</li> <li>regular analysis of progress made</li> <li>all material/texts encountered throughout the unit</li> <li>details of all performances (in class and public)</li> <li>details of other relevant assessments/links to other units</li> <li>bibliography.</li> </ul>
P3, M3, D3	The Voice Showreel	Learners as actors preparing a voice showreel.	Recorded extracts.
P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4	Voice in Performance	Learners as actors in a performance company.	The performance (recorded).

## Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Exploring Acting Skills	The Development of Drama	Performance Workshop
	Performing Scripted Plays	Performing to an Audience
	Acting Skills and Techniques	Classical Theatre Performance
		Contemporary Theatre Performance
		Musical Theatre Performance
		Auditioning For Actors
		Developing Voice for the Actor
		Principles of Acting
		Applying Acting Styles
		Audio Performance Acting
		Film and TV Acting
		Storytelling as Performance
		Stand-up Comic Technique

### Essential resources

For this unit it is vital that learners have access to a suitable space in which a range of vocal exercises can take place. Sufficient space will be needed so that all of the learners can lie down on the floor without being so close to each other that they could be distracted. It is important that as learners exercise their voices they do not cause disruption to other classes that may be taking place nearby. This will avoid unacceptable and counter-productive volume restrictions being imposed on the voice class). Equally, when learners are taking part in quiet breathing and relaxation exercises they should not be disturbed by excessive noise coming from other rooms nearby. A requirement of this unit is that learners are assessed in performance. Performance opportunities must be therefore made available in appropriate performance spaces. Tutors should use high quality audio and video recording equipment to record assessments and monitor learners' progress.

### Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres should develop links with local theatres, actors and voice practitioners. Actors working at a local theatre may be persuaded to visit the centre and provide their own insights into the importance of voice work and may even be persuaded to take a voice class with the group!

## Indicative reading for learners

### Textbooks

Berry C – *Voice and the Actor* (Virgin Books, 2000) ISBN 9780245520211

Carey D and Clark-Carey R – *The Vocal Arts Workbook and DVD: A Practical Course for Developing the Expressive Range of Your Voice* (Methuen Drama, 2008) ISBN 9780713688245

Clifford Turner J – *Voice and Speech in the Theatre* (Methuen Drama, 2007) ISBN 9780713681888

McCallion M – *The Voice Book: For Everyone who Wants to Make the Most of Their Voice* (Faber and Faber, 1998) ISBN 9780571195251

Mills J – *The Broadcast Voice* (Focal Press, 2004) ISBN 9780240519395

Rodenburg P – *The Actor Speaks: Voice and the Performer* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) ISBN 9780312295141

Rodenburg P – *The Right to Speak: Working with the Voice* (Methuen Drama, 1993) ISBN 9780878300556

### Website

[www.british-voice-association.com](http://www.british-voice-association.com)

The British Voice Association

## Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
<b>Independent enquirers</b>	identifying their own vocal characteristics researching and planning their own Vocal Development Programme
<b>Creative thinkers</b>	identifying their own vocal characteristics researching and planning their own Vocal Development Programme demonstrating competently the application of vocal techniques in response to a range of material
<b>Reflective learners</b>	identifying their own vocal characteristics researching and planning their own Vocal Development Programme carrying out an individual Vocal Development Programme demonstrating competently the application of vocal techniques in response to a range of material applying competent vocal technique in performance
<b>Team workers</b>	applying competent vocal technique in performance
<b>Self-managers</b>	carrying out an individual Vocal Development Programme demonstrating competently the application of vocal techniques in response to a range of material applying competent vocal technique in performance.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
<b>Creative thinkers</b>	preparing texts for performance considering the effects of pitch, pace, pause, inflection, dynamics etc
<b>Reflective learners</b>	reflecting on progress made and how to further improve performance
<b>Team workers</b>	in all sessions when working with others: In voice classes, in rehearsal and in performance
<b>Self-managers</b>	preparing material for voice classes and performance
<b>Effective participators</b>	working with others: in voice classes, in rehearsal and in performance.

## ● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
<b>English</b>	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	demonstrating the application of vocal techniques in response to a range of material
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	researching and planning their own Vocal Development Programme.