

# Unit 17: Developing Voice for the Actor

<b>Unit code:</b>	<b>L/502/5096</b>
<b>QCF Level 3:</b>	<b>BTEC National</b>
<b>Credit value:</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Guided learning hours:</b>	<b>60</b>

## ● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to develop learners' knowledge of the principles of voice production, vocal health and the benefits, to the actor, of regular vocal exercise.

## ● Unit introduction

This unit is concerned with a disciplined approach to relevant exercises and the application of vocal technique in performance. However, in order to fully appreciate the complex relationship between the actor and the actor's voice it is vital that learners understand how voice is produced. Therefore, this unit will also require learners to investigate the interaction of the speech organs and explore how an actor's whole body influences the quality of voice produced.

Voice production involves the use of specific muscles and developing and improving the voice requires these muscles to be regularly exercised. Throughout the unit learners will participate in regular vocal exercise (think of it as taking your voice to the gym) and other activities that will benefit all aspects of voice production. As learners become more familiar with the theory of voice production and more confident with practical voice work, they will also contribute to the delivery of voice classes.

Another significant aspect of this unit is vocal health. Learners will investigate how to maintain a healthy voice and how to avoid damaging their organs of speech.

In addition to the discipline of vocal development exercises, learners should gain as much experience as possible of testing their technique against a variety of texts. This can foster an appreciation of how different vocal tones can suit different styles of text, and how the aesthetic response to text informs considerations of pitch, pace and dynamics. Learners must also consider the implications for the voice of the demands of characterisation in a range of texts.

## ● Learning outcomes

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

- 1 Know the principles of voice production and vocal health
- 2 Be able to participate in and contribute to voice classes
- 3 Be able to demonstrate vocal technique in performance.

# Unit content

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## 1 Know the principles of voice production and vocal health

*Vocal organs:* tongue; jaw; nasal cavity; mouth; lips; hard palate; soft palate; alveolar ridge; resonators; larynx; pharynx; lungs; ribs; diaphragm; intercostal muscles; spine

*Vocal processes:* respiration; phonation; articulation; resonance

*Other factors:* posture; tension

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

## 2 Be able to participate in and contribute to voice classes

*Breathing and relaxation:* posture; body awareness; breath control; breath capacity; facial relaxation; body relaxation; specialist techniques eg Alexander technique, yoga

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

## 3 Be able to demonstrate vocal technique in performance

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

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

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

*Material:* eg published play scripts (classical 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> describe the principles of voice production and their association with vocal technique in performance [IE]	<b>M1</b> explain the principles of voice production and their association with vocal technique in performance	<b>D1</b> analyse the principles of voice production and their association with vocal technique in performance
<b>P2</b> describe how to maintain a healthy voice [IE]	<b>M2</b> explain how to maintain a healthy voice	<b>D2</b> analyse how to maintain a healthy voice
<b>P3</b> participate in voice classes [TW, EP]	<b>M3</b> engage in voice classes and demonstrate improvement in vocal technique	<b>D3</b> engage fully in voice classes and demonstrate significant improvement in vocal technique
<b>P4</b> contribute to the delivery of voice classes [TW, EP]	<b>M4</b> contribute to the delivery of voice classes demonstrating a considered use of vocal exercises	<b>D4</b> contribute to the delivery of voice classes demonstrating a considered and effective use of appropriate vocal exercises
<b>P5</b> demonstrate competently the application of vocal technique in performance. [TW, EP]	<b>M5</b> demonstrate a skilled and confident application of appropriate vocal technique in performance.	<b>D5</b> demonstrate a comprehensive and fully appropriate application of vocal technique in performance, with confidence, ease and fluency.

**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.

<b>Key</b>	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

It is recommended that learners are introduced to the principles of voice production from the outset of this unit. Helping learners to understand how they produce voice, without classes becoming 'like science', can be challenging. Therefore it is essential to concentrate only on what is relevant to the actor. For example: It is important that learners understand the process of respiration... up to a point. Learners should appreciate that when speaking, the outward, exhaled breath excites the vocal folds, positioned in the larynx, and that they vibrate and that these vibrations are amplified, enhanced and enriched, etc... it is not necessary, in this unit, for learners to be taught in any detail about the gas exchange in the lungs. The theory of voice production need not be taught in discrete 'theory' lectures. A better approach would be to integrate the theory into practical voice classes. Brief periods of discussion can be included at various times during voice classes when theory can be introduced or elaborated upon, where learners can ask questions and be given the opportunity to make notes and clarify the spelling of technical terms. Issues relating to vocal health can be introduced in a similar fashion, as part of predominantly practical voice classes.

Learners should participate at an early stage in a workshop audit of their vocal skills; the results can then be used as a benchmark against which future improvements can be measured. Include a combination of voice exercises and text based challenges that can be easily repeated at a later stage. It may be useful to create a simple pro-forma document covering various aspects of voice production that can be easily reproduced and used to record details of each learner's performance. Once completed, this document can be referred to along with other evidence such as learners' work in class and in performance) when considering criteria M3 and D3, which are specifically concerned with learners' ability to improve.

After a period of time, when learners have had some experience of many of the elements that are required to deliver a successful voice class, they should be given the responsibility of researching, preparing and delivering part of a voice class themselves. To avoid a superficial response, learners should be encouraged to discuss their research, use appropriate specialist terminology and be able to provide a rationale for their choice of exercise or exercises.

Learners must also be given the opportunity to apply their newly developed vocal skills in performance. Suitable performance opportunities may include 'in class' readings, storytelling, monologues, duologues or radio plays. Although not all pieces need be learnt, all should be carefully prepared. A high quality recording device (such as a mini disc 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.

Although voice is singled out in this unit as a separate area of study, it is vital that throughout this unit learners are continually reminded that vocal delivery is just one of many tools available to the actor. At no point should the holistic nature of performance be forgotten. It is, after all, the use of movement, gesture and proxemics as well as voice that creates and communicates meaning in performance. Similarly, although focusing on a specific aspect of voice production may help learners understand how voice is produced and can help learners identify areas for improvement, it must be made clear that the overall quality of voice they produce is determined by their whole body, the way in which they use their body and their physical, intellectual and emotional responses to the material they are engaging with.

## 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.
The anatomy of voice production – respiration, articulation and resonation. Theory is taught alongside practical exploration and vocal exercises. Establish 'ground rules' of behaviour and dress in voice classes – not assessed – whole class.
<b>Assignment 1: Voice Production Presentation and Research Portfolio – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2</b> Small groups/pairs deliver presentation, participate in Q&A and produce a portfolio of research. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assignment launch/research sources and methods.</li><li>• Learners research aspects of voice production and vocal health – individually and in small group/pair.</li><li>• Prepare and deliver presentation – small group/pair.</li><li>• Produce portfolio of research – individually.</li></ul>
<b>Assignment 2: Once Upon a Christmas Time – P5, M5, D5</b> Learners make a recording of a two-minute extract from a Christmas story. Using the voice in a performance context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assignment launch/discussion of suitable material.</li><li>• Learners select suitable material and rehearse performance – individually.</li><li>• Final preparation and recording of extracts – individually.</li></ul>
<b>Assignment 3: The Voice Coach – P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4</b> Learners contribute to the delivery of group voice classes and participate in each others' voice classes. Learners research and lead the group in voice exercises with the aim of improving their vocal delivery. Learner feedback from Assignment 2 and other performances should be used to help identify areas of weak technique. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assignment launch/discussion/one to one reflection on vocal performances to date.</li><li>• Learners identify areas of weak technique – individually.</li><li>• Research voice and prepare to lead voice exercises – individually.</li><li>• Contribute to the delivery of a voice class – individually/whole group.</li><li>• Participate in voice classes – whole group.</li><li>• Reflect on and evaluate progress – individually.</li></ul>
<b>Assignment 4: Fairy Cakes and Fairy Tales – P5, M5, D5</b> Learners prepare and perform two contrasting texts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assignment launch/discussion of suitable material.</li><li>• Learners select suitable material and rehearse performance – individually/in pairs.</li><li>• Final preparation and performance of two contrasting texts – individually/in pairs.</li></ul>
<b>Assignment 5: The Voice in Performance – P5, M5, D5</b> The learner's voice should be assessed in a performance context as part of at least one other assignment. Ideally criterion 5 should be integrated into another performance based assignment. Consideration should be given to preparing the voice for performance: warm-ups, vocal characterisation, use of pitch, pace, dynamics etc.

## Assessment

Learning outcome 1 could be evidenced through an individual or small group presentation. However, to ensure learners have sufficient opportunities to achieve at merit and distinction, each learner should provide additional supplementary evidence such as a research file and/or take part in a *viva voce* type assessment. When more than one learner in a cohort is assessed via *viva voce* care must be taken to ensure that all learners are asked the same lead questions, and that all are given equal opportunities to expand or clarify their answers. Interviewers must also ensure that questions are not phrased in such a way as to provide or suggest an answer. Presentations and *vivas* should be recorded for internal and external verification purposes.

Learning outcome 2 can be evidenced by recording learners as they participate in and contribute to the delivery of voice classes, and by tutor observation. Tutors must ensure that an initial skills audit takes place and that a method of tracking and recording the improvements of their learners is employed. However, the method used could be negotiated with or devised by learners. It is advisable that learners are requested to provide supplementary evidence to support their contribution to the delivery of voice classes, such as research materials and a voice class plan. This additional evidence will help tutors identify those learners who have truly 'considered' the use of vocal exercises and who are, therefore, eligible for higher grades.

Evidence for learning outcome 3 can take the form of video and/or audio recordings and tutor observations. Learners should regard the application of vocal skills in performance contexts as the culmination of the work done in voice classes and in their own time. It is advisable that tutors seek to provide learners with contrasting performance opportunities ranging from prepared 'in class' readings through to large scale productions where possibly several units are being assessed. A range of texts should be used that engage and challenge learners. Plays, radio dramas, monologues and duologues are obvious starting points but other useful texts could include recipes, poetry, children's stories, fantasy novels and even instruction manuals. An increasing number of actors are being used to provide voices for characters in animated films and computer games. Learners may enjoy writing and recording a monologue for a computer game or animated film that introduces either a character or a location.

To achieve P1, learners will have made a genuine attempt to describe the principles of voice production and their association with vocal technique in performance. However, they will have omitted some aspects, as identified in the unit content, and/or will have made some errors. For P2, learners will have been able to describe how to maintain a healthy voice although their responses will lack detail and analysis. Learners who participate in voice classes without fully engaging or demonstrating some improvement in vocal technique will achieve P3. It is important to clarify with learners the distinction between *participation* and *attendance*. Mere attendance is not enough to ensure a pass grade for this criterion. To achieve P4 learners will be able to make a valid contribution to the delivery of voice classes. Learners may lead the class in vocal warm-up exercises, relaxation exercises and/or text-based work. Although the activities may be of significant benefit to those participating in the class, learners who are unable to provide a 'considered' rationale for their contribution can only achieve a pass grade. Learners who achieve P5 may lack some confidence but they will be able to demonstrate a limited but competent application of vocal technique in performance.

Merit level learners will be able to explain all of the principles of voice production, as described in the unit content, and explain how to maintain a healthy voice. Learners who achieve M1 will have been able to make the connections between each aspect of voice production and their effects on the quality of voice produced. Merit level learners will be fully engaged in voice classes and will, throughout the duration of the unit, demonstrate some improvement in an area or areas of vocal delivery. For example, learners may have improved their breathing technique so that they are able to achieve greater capacity and control or they may have improved their articulation to such an extent that previously 'difficult' texts are able to be performed accurately. To achieve M4 learners will consider what they want to accomplish in the context of a voice class and select/devise exercises and activities accordingly. In performance, merit level learners will demonstrate a skilled and confident application of appropriate vocal technique. Nothing about the vocal delivery will detract from the overall performance.

To achieve a distinction, learners will demonstrate a more sophisticated understanding of the principles of voice production and their association with vocal technique in performance. Learners will fully appreciate how each aspect of voice production contributes to the overall quality of voice that is produced and will be able to analyse how to maintain a healthy voice. Distinction level learners will fully engage in all voice classes and will make significant improvements throughout the duration of the unit. Learners who achieve D4 will have proved themselves to be an asset to the voice class. Their preparation and research prior to making their contributions to the delivery of voice classes will ensure that all of the exercises and activities used will be appropriate and effective. Distinction level learners will deliver confident, consistent and highly effective vocal performances. The learner will engage the audience and be seemingly at ease throughout the duration of the performance.

## 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
PI, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2	Assignment 1: Voice Production Presentation and Research Portfolio  (Groups of three or four. Learners research, prepare and deliver a presentation covering respiration, articulation, resonance; a healthy and effective voice.)	Learners as applicants for 'Director of Voice' job are required to deliver a presentation on a significant aspect of voice production and take part in a question and answer session covering any aspect of voice production.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• presentation (recorded)</li> <li>• Q&amp;A*</li> <li>• (recorded)</li> <li>• collated research*.</li> </ul> <p><i>*Due to time constraints and the number of learners being assessed it may only be practicable for individual learners to cover <b>one</b> significant aspect of voice production in their presentation, eg respiration, articulation, resonance; a healthy and effective voice. However, to ensure coverage of M1, D1, P2, M2 and D2 the Q&amp;A should allow for a broader range of subject matter and learners must be encouraged to include all of the aspects of voice production, as identified in the unit content, in their collated research.</i></p>

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P5, M5, D5	Once Upon a Christmas Time (Learners participate in a series of voice classes and make a recording of a two min extract from a Christmas story.)	Learners as actors attending a series of voice classes at <i>The Actors' Centre</i> . Following an initial skills audit learners are assessed on their level of engagement in voice classes and their level of improvement.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>engagement and improvement in class (recorded/tutor observation)</li> <li>application of skills and improvement in performance contexts (recorded/tutor observation).</li> </ul>
P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4	The Voice Coach (Learners research, prepare and deliver part of a voice class and participate in classes led by other learners.)	Learners as a voice coach taking a voice class. Learners also participate in classes led by their peers.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delivery of vocal exercises (recorded) P4, M4, D4</li> <li>engagement and improvement in class (recorded/tutor observation)</li> <li>application of skills and improvement in performance contexts (recorded/tutor observation) P3, M3, D3.</li> </ul>
P5, M5, D5	Fairy Cakes and Fairy Tales (Learners select, prepare and read the 'method' from a recipe and an extract from a children's story.)	Learners as actors preparing a voice-over show reel.	Recorded extracts.
P5, M5, D5	Voice in Performance (Learners take part in a significant performance opportunity, ideally an integrated assignment assessing criteria from other units, For example, <i>Applying Acting Styles, Contemporary Theatre Performance</i> or <i>Classical Theatre Performance</i> .)	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
		Auditions for Actors
		Voice and 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 can lead to unacceptable and counterproductive 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 therefore be 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. An actor working at a local theatre may be persuaded to visit the centre and provide 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

Jewers S, Carnaghan C and Webster P – *BTEC National Performing Arts Student Book* (Pearson Education, 2010) ISBN 9781846906787

Jewers S, Carnaghan C and Webster P – *BTEC National Teacher Resource Pack* (Pearson Education, 2010) ISBN 9781846906794

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 Achieving Clarity and Expression with 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>Creative thinkers</b>	developing vocal exercises
<b>Self-managers</b>	practising vocal exercises and techniques
<b>Effective participators</b>	taking part in vocal exercises and techniques.

## ● 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	delivering vocal exercises and techniques to others
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	researching and collating information on vocal exercises and techniques.