

Breathing & Voice Production

A Glossary of Terms

Resonance:

The way a voice vibrates in the air as it travels that defines how others hear and perceive its warmth, tone and the intention behind the words we use.

Resonators:

Cavities and spaces in the body, (the thorax, or chest, the throat the nose and mouth) through which our breath passes as it carries our voice - these spaces enable the sound we make to be changed (amplified) adding power to the sound waves, increasing their volume, richness and altering the pitch.

Pitch:

The level of the 'notes' of sound - high pitched sounds thin and whiny, low pitch sounds warm and deep.

Abdomen:

The abdomen is the space or cavity in the body situated below the rib cage and above the hips, commonly known as the tummy or the belly.

Abdominal Muscles:

The abdominal muscles are the ones around that cavity called the abdomen that protect the internal organs that are situated there - like the intestines, stomach, kidneys and liver.

Tone:

This refers to how the sounds we make come across to others (and ourselves - most people find their own voice sounds very different to how they imagine it is when they hear a recording of themselves. Adjectives commonly used to describe vocal tone can vary from cold and thin to warm, rich, like chocolate - and many others in between!

Placement:

This describes the skills one can develop to be able choose which of the resonators in the body one uses to produce the voice and change its tone and pitch.

Projection:

The ability to direct sound one makes and make it travel efficiently and effortlessly over greater distances from quiet to loud (and **not** from whisper to shout or scream) without the risk of damaging the vocal folds in the throat or losing your ability to speak at all!

Centred / Diaphragmatic breathing:

This involves moving the abdominal muscles and the diaphragm to control the intake and expulsion of air into and out of the lungs, onto which we place our speech (see the document "Breathing 1" that accompanies this glossary.

This is in fact the correct way to breathe that ensures the most efficient and effortless way to produce our voice - babies do it naturally. (If you can imagine a baby lying in its bed crying -and visualise it doing this, sometimes for quite long periods, without losing its voice. The baby is using its tummy or belly muscles to move the air and thus create the breath on which its cries are travelling.

Sound waves:

Sound travels through air in waves that move the air as they travel. They vary in frequency and affect volume and pitch. This movement of the air is what causes our eardrums to respond and enable our brains to hear the world around us.

Volume:

This means the loudness or quietness of the sounds we make or hear and is directly related to the wave frequency of the sound made.