



Exploring 4-H at Home

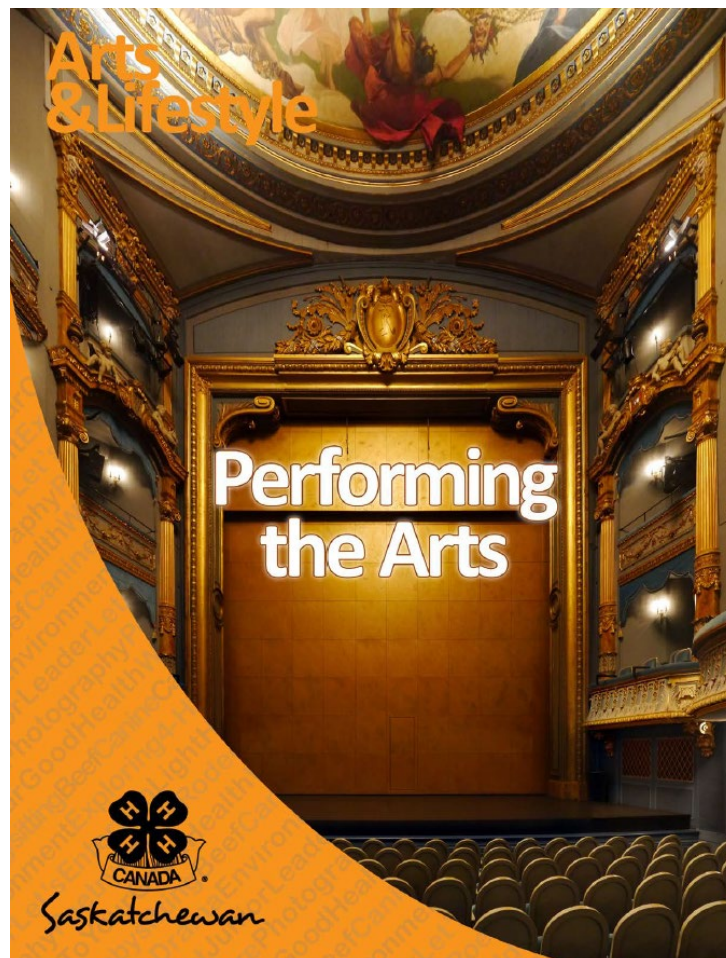


Environment & Healthy
Living

Pillar: Environment & Healthy Living

Project: Performing Arts

Activities: Drama Exercises



Drama Exercises to help you be a better speaker!

Drama exercises are really good for helping you with speak—not just 4-H public speaking, but speaking in general. Here are some basic **Voice Warm-Ups** you can do to help you be a better speaker—both in like and on the 4-H Public Speaking Stage! Yes, some of these exercises may seem a little “weird”, but they really do help you to speak better! ;)

Like any sport, you should stretch to speak. You can actually do damage to your vocal cords if you use them repeatedly without warming up. Have you ever cheered really loudly for a sports team, and gotten a sore throat or made your voice go hoarse? If you do this on a regular basis, you can permanently damage your vocal cords! You know Nickelback’s Chad Kroger? Holy Vocal Damage, Batman! Here are some easy techniques for warming up your voice.

Voice Warm-Ups:

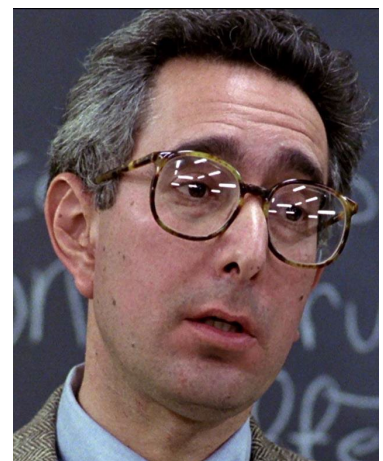
STRETCH:

- Stretch out your face muscles by puckering up your lips, eyes and face as small as they will go
- Let open your eyes and mouth really wide to stretch them out the opposite way.
- You can even let out an “Ooooo” when your face is scrunched up, and an “Aaaah!” when its open wide.
- Rub your face too – give it a massage. Even massage your neck, nose and lips. You can even tug on your lips to stretch them out.
- Do some gentle humming for a few minutes—vary your humming pitch so you are humming as high as you can, and as low as you can. Don’t overdo it.

SPEAKING IN NON-MONOTONE:

We’ve all heard someone speak in a monotone. A monotone, of course, is that boring, one-pitched, robotic sounding voice that seems to drone on and on, until you tune it out completely. Have someone listen to you either say your 4-H speech, or give a description about something, and ask them if you might have a monotone—that is, you don’t vary your pitch very often. Here’s a super weird tip to try out! :D

- To help improve a monotone, practice your pitch.
- Say your speech or read from a book while speaking really, really high and then really, really low (and in between too).
- Try going up and down the “scale”. Scale is a musical term. You’ve heard the song Do-Re-Mi? Same thing!



NOTE: Just because you might be practicing your speech by saying it really high and really low doesn't mean you are going to say it like this in front of the audience... But by practicing in different tones, you are stretching your throat muscles to make more sound and not speak in a monotone. Try going up and down the scale and then say your speech normally. Your voice will automatically be less monotonous.

SPEAKING WITH LOTS OF BREATH & LOUDNESS:

You've all been to gym class where you've had to run around and then speak to someone. It's hard, isn't it?! That's because you aren't breathing as deeply and your voice isn't supported with a decent amount of breath. The same thing can happen to your body and your breath support when you are nervous; you don't breathe in as much as you do when you are calm. If you have to speak for a longer time period, or say longer sentences than you're used to (like in a 4-H speech!), you have to make sure you have enough breath to last the whole speech.

Here are some deep breathing techniques that actually are used by professional actors to improve their voices for the stage and screen!

- **Yawn** – taking in deep breathes almost always leads to yawning. This is a good thing, contrary to what your teacher says. Yawning is an easy way to slow down your breathing when you are nervous
- **Breathe out on a Sound** – Try inhaling a deep breath and blowing out your air on an 's' or 'z' sound. Try to hold that sound, or "sustain" it, for five seconds, then 10, then 15, etc. This actually stretches your lungs so you can fill them with more air next time you breathe in. This will allow you to say more with less breath so you can get all the way through a sentence without having to pause for a breath.

- **Child's Pose** – If your mom has ever taken yoga, she will know this one! Go on your hands and knees on the floor. Sit back so your feet are under your derrière (or somewhere thereabouts). With your knees as close together as possible, try and rest your forehead on the ground. Your arms should fall alongside your body resting on the floor, so your hands trail out by your feet. See the picture:



Now here's the easy part. All you have to do in this pose is lie there and breathe! What this position does is naturally open up your lungs so they expand (or stretch) so they can take in more air, which in turn will give you more breath support.

Stay in this pose for about 5 minutes a day and take steady deep breaths. You'll notice that this is very relaxing, and your voice may even sound a little deeper when you are done. In this pose, you can even try Breathing out on a Sound (the exercise right before this one). Try exhaling on an 's', 'z', 'f' or soft 'j' sound (like the French word, "Je"). How many seconds can you hold them before without having to gasp for air?

- **Say Your Speech** - Directly after you have done these Voice Warm-Ups, say your speech or read from a book. Do you notice it's easier to say? Try experimenting with your voice when you say it – different pitches and pauses. Even though the difference from your regular voice may be minimal at first, keep doing these exercises. In no time flat, not having enough breath or air will be a thing of the past!

SPEAKING LOUD ENOUGH – You may have written the most amazing 4-H speech in history of 4-H. But how will anyone know this if they can't hear you?! You can spend all the time in the world fine-tuning and memorizing your speech, but it's all pretty pointless to do unless the audience can hear you!

- Practice saying your speech as though you are talking to Great Aunt Agatha who is very hard of hearing.
- This may sound loud to you, but when you are in a room full of people, this level of loudness is perfect!
- Watch you don't speak in a monotone.
- Also, the breathing exercises above will help you with this too – If you take in good breaths of air, you will be able to speak louder as well.

SPEAKING CLEARLY:

When you speak, do your words get all jumbled in your mouth when you try and talk?! The problem is that you are speaking too fast! An easy way around this is quite simple, and no, it's not "Talk slower"...

Try some tongue twisters!

But when you say them, make sure that you are pronouncing every single syllable, especially 't', 'k' and 's' sounds at the end of words. When you say these tongue twisters the point of the exercise is NOT to say them fast, but rather to pronounce the words properly. You can even over-pronounce them, so your mouth opens up more than usual. Here are some twisters to try:

- Toy boat.
- She sells sea shells by the sea shore.
- Peter Pepper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
- How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?
- All I want is a proper cup of coffee made in a proper copper coffee pot. Tin coffee pots, steel coffee pots, they're no good to me. If I can't have a proper cup of coffee made in a proper copper coffee pot, I'll have a cup of tea.

HINT: If you find that you are speaking too fast, you may have to actually tell yourself in your mind to SLOW DOWN! Speaking quickly can be hard to overcome, but keep at it and force yourself to slow down, even if you are already halfway through your speech.