

LESSON 4

Volume and Rate

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Define volume and rate.
- ◆ Understand the function and importance of volume and rate.
- ◆ Participate in drills, exercises, and activities for developing and improving an actor's volume and rate.

Warm Up



After class today, keep a mental record of how many times someone asks you to repeat what you said. Also count how many times you ask someone else to repeat what he or she said.

Volume

Volume is how loudly or softly you speak. The basis for a person's volume is breath control. Actors must develop breath control to regulate the amount of air being used when speaking. They also need to

volume

how softly or loudly a person speaks.

Even with the advantages of modern technology, actors still need exceptional volume, rate, and placement skills when performing outdoors.



use proper voice placement (directing the voice where the audience is located). Otherwise, the result will be uneven volume or unclear sounds and words.

The distance between the actor and the audience will be a problem if volume is not used properly. As you can imagine, your audience will be disappointed if they can't hear what you are saying. Shouting is never an answer. You can place your voice where it is needed by focusing your vocal energy to your listeners. It is your responsibility, as an actor, to train your voice for adequate volume. You must constantly have the desire to be heard, and you must understand what it takes to reach that goal. A good performance demands it.

Remember that good posture and breath control are essential in the drills and exercises for improving your volume. The diaphragm plays the key role in producing volume for the stage.

ACTION



- 1. Counting the 5s.** Count slowly by 5s—5, 10, 15, 20, and so on—increasing your volume with each number.
- 2. Counting the 5s with Stress.** Repeat exercise 1, this time emphasizing every other number. On each number that is emphasized, mentally and verbally project the sound farther and farther away.
- 3. Hello!** While carefully inhaling, say the word “hello” and repeat it several times. Begin softly and increase the loudness. Repeat the drill in reverse, going from loud to soft.
- 4. ABCs.** Recite the letters of the alphabet, increasing the volume with each letter. Repeat the drill starting with the last letter of the alphabet. This time begin loudly and get softer.
- 5. The Comics Are Everywhere.** Bring your favorite comic strip or comic book to class. Read the passage in a variety of places. For example, begin by reading to a small group; next, read in front of the entire class; then move to a cafeteria or an auditorium; and finally, read outside to a group. You must physically and mentally adjust your breathing and volume for each location.
- 6. Favorite Children's Story.** Repeat exercise 5 using a favorite childhood story.

Warm Up



In your journal, explain why listening to someone talk too fast or too slow results in ineffective communication.

Rate

Rate is the speed at which you speak. Rate and volume affect each other. Again, breath control is important in having an effective rate both for everyday speaking and onstage. Many actors mispronounce and slur their words when they speak too fast. When this happens, the audience becomes lost and confused.

Never cause your audience to misunderstand what's going on because of rapid speaking. Rate is one of the elements of voice that can be

rate

the speed at which someone speaks.

effectively used for characterization. You must give your audience time to listen and think about what they hear. Onstage, some characters do need to speak rapidly, but it is possible to control articulation inside a rapid rate. Always remember that this is the first time, and probably the only time, the audience will see and hear the performance.

ACTION



- 1. Watching Time Go By.** Using the second hand on a watch, time yourself counting. Count from 1 to 5 in 5 seconds. Count from 1 to 10 in 10 seconds. Count from 1 to 20 in 20 seconds. Learn to control your rate when you speak. Repeat the drill and ask a classmate to listen to your rate. Experiment with speaking at various rates. Have the volunteer suggest your best rate of speaking to be easily understood.
- 2. Story Time.** Bring a folktale, fairy tale, or children's story to class. Divide into pairs and read the stories to each other. Practice reading at a rate that is understandable. Vary your rate to make the story interesting and lively.
- 3. Rhyme Time.** Read the following poems aloud, varying your rate for the best vocal reading.

Silver

Slowly, silently, now the moon
Walks the night in her silver shoon;
This way, and that, she peers, and sees
Silver fruit upon silver trees;
One by one the casements catch
Her beams beneath the silvery thatch;
Couched in his kennel, like a log,
With paws of silver sleeps the dog;
From their shadowy cote the white breasts peep
Of doves in a silver-feathered sleep;
A harvest mouse goes scampering by,
With silver claws, and silver eye;
And moveless fish in the water gleam,
By silver reeds in a silver stream.

Walter de la Mare

City, City

I

City, city,
Wrong and bad,
Looms above me
When I'm sad,
Throws its shadow
On my care,
Sheds its poison
In my air,
Pounds me with its
Noisy fist,

○ Sprays me with its
Sooty mist.
Till, with sadness
○ On my face,
I long to live
Another place.

○ **II**

○ City, city,
Golden-clad,
○ Shines around me
When I'm glad,
○ Lifts me with its
Strength and height,
○ Fills me with its
Sound and sight,
○ Takes me to its
Crowded heart,
Holds me so I
○ Won't depart.
○ Till, with gladness
On my face,
○ I wouldn't live
Another place.

○ *Marci Ridlon*

- 4. Judging Rate from the Stage.** Bring to class an acceptable article from a favorite magazine or book. Choose a paragraph to read aloud. Focus on your rate of speaking. Go to the stage or cafeteria to read the passage. Repeat the activity, but tell from memory what you have read to the class. Notice the changes in your rate.
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