

# VOICE STRAIN ASSESSMENT AND ACOUSTIC RISKS

## 1. IDENTIFY

NAME: .....

DATE: ...../...../.....

SYMPTON	WHEN					HOW FREQUENTLY				Voice care strategy needed ? ✓
	Never	During Teaching	After Teaching	Evening - after Teaching	Rarely	Some times	Often	Constantly		
1. A feeling of discomfort in the throat										
2. Tired feeling in throat										
3. Soreness/pain										
4. Dryness										
5. Aching										
6. A tickling sensation										
7. A feeling of tightness/pressure in throat										
8. A scratchy/burning sensation										
9. A lump in throat										
10. Huskiness										
11. Croakiness										
12. Hoarseness										
13. Breaks in the voice										
14. A change in pitch										
15. Reduced pitch range										
16. Difficulty projecting the voice										
17. A feeling that talking is an effort										
18. Running out of breath while speaking										
19. Only able to whisper										

## 2. ASSESS

**Consider the severity of symptom/s experienced and how frequently they occur:**

<b>Symptoms rare</b>	= <b>Low risk.</b> No action necessary. Adopt good voice care strategies. Monitor.
<b>Symptoms sometimes</b>	= <b>Low risk.</b> Review your voice care management strategies. Monitor.
<b>Symptoms often</b>	= <b>Moderate risk.</b> Document a Voice Strain Control Plan in consultation with your manager and/or health and safety representative. Monitor the effectiveness of the control strategies. Seek medical opinion, advice from a speech pathologist may be necessary if symptoms continue.
<b>Symptoms constantly</b>	= <b>High risk.</b> Immediate action required. Seek medical advice. Document a Voice Strain Control Plan in consultation with your manager and/or health and safety representative. Monitor effectiveness of the control strategies.

**Voice problems should not be accepted by teachers as an occupational hazard**

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I use my voice more than I have to?
- Could I effectively use other methods of getting my message across?
- Do I use my voice as efficiently as I can?
- Can I speak at a quieter level during certain classroom activities?
- Is the layout of the classroom conducive to efficient voice use?
- Do I always talk above background noise?
- What is the source of the noise and how can I reduce its impact on my voice use?

When you have determined the answers to these questions consider what behaviour modification techniques you could employ to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of your voice.

## 3. CONTROL

### TO PREVENT VOCAL STRAIN

This may simply require changing the layout of the classroom (refer to the Acoustics Checklist), and/or organising a system of times when students are silent, times when they may talk with their neighbours and times when they may talk in a group. Set the rules so that you can easily attract their attention without resorting to shouting.

- Turn down, shut out, or move away from noise in the environment while talking.
- Use gesture and other non-vocal signals to give instructions such as clapping your hands to gain attention.
- Talk to groups or classes when the students are quiet.
- Stand in a place in the classroom that will make it easiest for the students to hear you without straining your voice.
- Arrange the classroom so that students who are likely to be noisy or need extra attention are at the front.
- Use methods of behaviour management which don't involve yelling or loud talking.
- Produce your speech sounds clearly and precisely and slow your speech down a little so that students can understand you without the need for you to talk very loudly or repeat yourself.
- Use routines such as playing a particular piece of music or using a bell to signal changes in the classroom activity.
- Move close to students when talking to them.
- Sing only in a range and style that is comfortable for you where possible,
- Use a voice amplifier or megaphone.

- Give instructions to a small number of students who then have the responsibility for informing the rest of the class.
- Plan the day so that you build in vocal rest periods when you do not need to talk.

You can work on reducing the symptoms of voice strain by using strategies such as:

- Drinking water frequently throughout the day.
- Sipping water whenever you feel the urge to cough or clear the throat.
- Sucking on a sweet, but avoiding medicated cough lollies which may irritate your throat further.
- Swallowing instead of coughing or clearing the throat.
- Yawning whenever you feel the urge to cough or clear the throat.
- Consciously suppressing the urge to cough or clear the throat.

Coughing may be part of an acute throat infection and it is important to take particular care of your voice if you have an acute infection.

**VOICE STRAIN CONTROL PLAN**

**Symptoms**

**Voice Care Strategies:**

**Implement voice care strategies, monitor symptoms over time (if necessary duplicate table). Keep your site manager (and where relevant medical advisers) informed of progress.**

	<b>Monitor frequency of symptoms</b>				
	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Week 5</b>
<b>Constant</b> (List symptoms)					
<b>Often</b> (List symptoms)					
<b>Sometimes</b> (List symptoms)					
<b>Rare</b> (List symptoms)					

# ACOUSTIC RISK CHECKLIST

## To Identify Acoustic Risk Factors in the Classroom

AREA \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**NB:** Risk factors identified in specific areas should be recorded on the site OHS&W Action Plan and addressed through site management processes.

Risk factor	Example	Yes	No	N/A	Action required to reduce the problem Where necessary seek advice from Site Property Services	Recorded on Action Plan ? Yes / No
1. There are large areas of exposed glass in this area.	1/2 to 1/3 of the window area has no treatments. e.g. vertical drapes .	Yes	No	N/A		
2. This area has large open spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is in an “open space unit”</li> <li>• A section of the wall has been removed</li> <li>• A wall has a large archway.</li> </ul>	Yes	No	N/A		
3. Large sections of the walls in this area are uncovered.	No wall hangings, few pinboards etc.	Yes	No	N/A		
4. Pinboards in this area are completely covered with paint/paper/posters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pinboard material been painted</li> <li>• More than 2/3 of the pinboard is covered with posters etc</li> </ul>	Yes	No	N/A		
5. The floor surfaces in this area are a hard type.	Uncovered wood/concrete	Yes	No	N/A		
6. The air conditioner in this area is noisy.	Colleagues & TRTs complain about the A/C noise.	Yes	No	N/A		
7. The air conditioner is sited above the blackboard?		Yes	No	N/A		

Risk factor	Example	Yes No N/A	Action required to reduce the problem Where necessary seek advice from Site Property Services	Recorded on Action Plan ? Yes / No
8. The wall or window mounted air conditioner is left on for extended periods.	The air conditioner switch is out of reach and therefore it is left on during lesson time.	Yes No N/A		
9. The air conditioner filter is dirty. (window/wall mounted air conditioners)?	The filter has not been cleaned in the past 12 months	Yes No N/A		
10. An echo is present in the room when vacant.	A hollow sound when you speak or make noise.	Yes No N/A		
11. This area has a high ceiling.	Over 3 metres high.	Yes No N/A		
12. This area has a low ceiling.	Lower than 2.4 metres	Yes No N/A		
13. The classroom is exposed to constant, noise from outside?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road/air traffic</li> <li>• Canteen delivery traffic</li> <li>• Student movement</li> </ul>	Yes No N/A		
14. There is a constant electrical noise in this area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computers</li> <li>• Fish tank aerator/filter</li> <li>• Lights</li> <li>• Extractor fans</li> <li>• Hand driers</li> <li>• Office activities</li> </ul>	Yes No N/A		

**Additional Comments:**