

VOICE



What is voice?

Voice is the ability to make sounds by vibrating the vocal cords. The buzzing sound made by the vibrating vocal cords is called the *voice*. Air from the lungs moves up through the windpipe (trachea) and between the vocal cords inside the voice box (larynx). If it is strong enough this causes them to vibrate.

How do we use our voice?

The voice is used in **speech**.

Speech sounds

Some speech sounds are made with the vocal cords vibrating. For example the sound 'z', as in the word *zoo*. Test it yourself. Put your fingers on your voice box and make a long 'zzzz' sound – like a bee buzzing. You can feel the vibration in your voice box through your fingers. This is because the vocal cords are moving. Some speech sounds are made without the vocal cords vibrating. For example the sound 's', as in the word *Sue*. Try it again. Put your fingers on your voice box. Now make a long 'sss' sound – like a snake hissing. This time there is no vibration in the voice box because the vocal cords are not vibrating.

Prosody

We can alter things about our voice when we speak:

- **pitch** – how high or low it sounds
- **volume** – how loud or soft it is
- **rate** – how fast or slow we speak

The ability to change these when we speak is called prosody.

Is voice called anything else?

- tone
- intonation (but this usually just means varying the pitch)

Using voice successfully

We must be able to switch our voice boxes on and off when required. This depends on which speech sounds make up the words.

Changing the pitch, volume and rate to create a rhythmical beat and a musical quality gives a clear voice. This makes it easier for people to understand us when we are talking. If our voice is flat with little change it can sound boring. People might also think that we are not interested in what they are saying.