

Course One

How to Sound Smart, Confident, and Engaging

Free Lesson: An Introduction to the Speech Stairs Strategy with Course Highlights and How Skills Blend Together

After this free lesson team members will:

- Sound more captivating by learning how to speak with more vocal variety, pitch changes and inflection
- Have every sentence sounding confident and smart using the Speech Stairs Strategy
- Control fast speech and have more volume and power to your voice

Speaking while moving up and down in pitch is the speech melody pattern that international and American news broadcasters, political figures, and trained business professional's use. This speaking style can be described as speaking with a controlled rate to allow speech sounds to be clear and sharp while the vocal variety of patterns produce an interesting melody for listeners. The term intonation describes how melody patterns and moving pitch tones are used while talking.

The best strategy for changing your intonation pattern is to think of your speech moving up and then down a staircase. This is a very easy concept to understand, and I use it with all my clients. The visual analogy of a staircase is a helpful technique for understanding how to move your speech melody patterns and therefore change your speaking style. Everyone understands the concept of moving speech up and then down a staircase.

Speaking with intonation is not a hard skill to learn, but it may feel funny, contrived, and slower than how you are currently speaking. On average, it typically takes three weeks for this new speaking pattern to become a habit. After some practice, this new skill that once felt funny will become more

natural, and your speech melody will be more professional, interesting, and clear. As a result, you will be feeling more confident when you speak because the melody pattern sounds smart and is easy to follow and understand.

This is how to speak using the speech staircase strategy. First, begin your statement in your “natural” tone. Then move up one step higher on the speech stairs early in your statement, which is typically on the second or third word. Then move your pitch down the speech stairs on every syllable for the rest of your statement until done. For longer and more complex statements, you would move up in pitch a second time and then travel down the speech stairs syllable by syllable until you complete the statement. For even longer statements, you would step up a third time and then travel down the speech stairs and end on a lower note. Pitch tones are always moving up and then down, and you always end on a lower tone for clear and impactful-sounding speech. After you go up on the speech stairs, you move lower and down, lower and down, and lower and down until you are done with your statement or have another rise in pitch up the speech stairs to continue with your statement. On your final word or syllable, end on a lower tone for clarity and speaking with intonation.

This style of speaking can be observed with news broadcasters. As an exercise, I have my clients listen to news or sports broadcasters’ melody patterns and identify when the pitch moves up in the statement and then moves down. I also have them notice that statements always end on a lower tone.

Learning to speak along the speech stairs will immediately increase the clarity of your words because your speech rate will be controlled and you will have better range of motion with your speech articulators (lips, tongue, and jaw), positioning you to say sounds and words more clearly. You will also experience better projection because your speech sound waves are exiting your mouth cavity, creating more power and volume naturally. Often, my clients will comment that this feels funny or too slow, and they may notice that their mouth has more range of motion. This is the new goal; remember that it takes about three weeks for this new style of speaking to feel normal.

Examples of Moving Up and Down Using the Speech Stairs Strategy

The ^{cat} is fat. She is ^{ve-}ry ^{pret-}ty. Let's ^{go} to the ^{wed-}ding. You can ^{work} af-ter you eat.

- In the first example, there is a rise in pitch on the word “cat.” Then the melody moves down in pitch on each syllable for the rest of the statement. The rise up in pitch followed by moving down in pitch on each syllable creates the melody known as intonation. For sharp articulation, be sure to say the final /t/ in the word “cat.” You are expected to say final sounds at the end of sentences for sharp articulation.
- In the second example, “She is very pretty,” the rise in pitch happens to be on the first syllable of “very.” The phrase “She is” stays at the same pitch. As soon as there is a rise in pitch, there is a drop on every syllable for the rest of the statement.
- Notice the same pitch style in the other two examples. Notice the modulation and vocal variety. You may also start to notice that you are having more range of motion with your mouth.

Note: As a reminder, a syllable is an individual sound segment in a word, which is usually a consonant and vowel combination. For example, “cat” is a one-syllable word, “pizza” is a two-syllable word, and “computer” is a three-syllable word.

Examples of Longer Statements Using the Speech Stairs Strategy

The cat is fat and should lose some weight.
She is very pretty and intelligent.
Let's go to the wedding and have some fun.

Be flat on the step: When you are coming down the stairs on every syllable, be sure your speech is flat on every step to avoid an upward inflection in pitch on the vowel sound. This is a common habit for accented or younger speakers. English does not have any significant pitch rises on individual vowel sounds. I like the analogy of a staircase because steps are flat and they do not curve up. Your pitch should not move up in inflection on vowel sounds.

If you are a fast or quiet talker: Hold the vowel sound segment a little longer with each syllable as you move up and then down the speech stairs. Create separation between each syllable. Otherwise, your speech will lack clarity because of fast speech or mumbling. Fast speech will cause you to omit final sounds in words or blend words together that should have some separation.

Holding the vowel sound longer on each syllable will naturally slow your rate of speech and bring more volume to your voice. Your voice will become louder and more powerful because vowel sounds are voiced sounds and they, therefore, bring more volume and power to your voice for every syllable that you say. When you talk too fast or mumble, vowel sounds are held for too short a time, which makes your voice seem quiet and lacking power. If you notice that you do not project as well as others, hold the vowel sound longer as a strategy to reduce fast speech and increase the volume in your voice.

Speaking with clear and effective intonation is the number one, most important skill for effective communication. As the five-courses progress, intonation will move to an advanced level for conversational speech and delivering more interesting and effective presentations. Using intonation along with strategic communication styles and eliminating ineffective speech habits will be demonstrated. In course three, it will be demonstrated how to speak with a stronger and more powerful voice. The three voice resonating cavities will be introduced and revealed on how to speak with good resonance and then apply voice to the speech stairs strategy. The final mechanical skill for effective communication is to speak from a full diaphragm breath with will be revealed in course four. Finally in course five, how to deliver an amazing and memorable presentation will be demonstrated with a multiple of important topics.

Thank you for participating in this free lesson. I hope you found it insightful and helpful. I wish you great success!

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