

Voice & Message Banking

Voice and message banking is the process of recording and storing an individual's voice that can then be used to support communication.

There are two main types of voice banking:

- Message (Word and Phrase) recordings – 'Message Banking'
- Creating a personalised synthesised voice – 'Voice Banking'

Both of these types of banking can be used as an effective communication tool.

Individuals can record and store their own voice or may use a 'proxy'. The 'proxy' is usually someone who sounds similar, or has a connection to the individual.

The recordings of words/phrases can then be used to speak a message from a smart phone, computer, or tablet, or via a communication software package.

A synthesised voice can be downloaded onto specific communication software packages. This gives the option of having a more personalised voice, rather than the standard computer generated voices that are more typically available.

This information sheet aims to summarise the different voice and message banking options.

More resources related to voice and message banking are available online, particularly via [John Costello @ Boston Children's Hospital](#) – [including definitions of the different types of banking](#).

Please also note – there are other techniques and approaches to personalising communication

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Recordings (Message Banking)

You can record messages in lots of different ways – either through a computer, a smart phone (iPhone etc) or tablet.

It is a good idea to:

- record in a quiet place
- record in the same place
- not to let your voice rise at the end of the message (unless you are asking a question)
- not be a perfectionist about the process. For example, pauses, errr's..... etc. are all fine
- name the recording a sensible name so you can easily use it later.

What messages?

It may be hard to work out what to record. One idea that can help is to keep a communication diary – i.e. jot down in a note pad when you say a phrase you think would be good to record for future use.

You may want to think about recording messages related to:

- your personality
- your interests/hobbies
- your humour
- messages for control (e.g. “Leave me alone, Come back later)
- messages you can use on the phone
- emotions
- greetings, chit-chat
- Potential needs for the future (e.g. messages relating to medical or personal care issues)

[This resource from John Costello has a list of phrases that may be helpful.](#)

Using recordings – Phones/Tablets

A simple way to use the recordings is to name them appropriately (e.g. Hi, want-a-pint, bye) and to save them on a phone or a tablet. You can put the recordings in folders in the same way you would put music onto a device.

Using recordings – AAC software

Recordings can also be used in specific communication software . For example, the phrase is put behind a button that you press on the screen. You can add different messages/ phrases to different buttons .

This may allow the messages to be:

- More easily accessed
- For them to be combined with another message using synthesised speech
- Accessed via another method other than touch e.g. switch access

Using recordings – other tools

- messagebanking.com - There is now a dedicated website to allow you to make recordings. You can choose to download the messages you record on this site at no cost.

Note - we have not tested/evaluated this website/process yet.

Creating a Personalised Synthesised Voice (Voice Banking)

A synthesised voice is a computer generated voice that can speak out any text entered into the computer. Voice banking can be used to create a 'personalised' synthesised voice – a computer generated voice that has *characteristics* of the original, natural voice.

To create a 'personalised', synthesised voice, you need to record a very large number of words and phrases into the computer, the computer then creates a synthesised voice based on these recordings.

Remember that a personalised, synthesised voice:

- will not sound exactly like the individual, but will sound similar;
- may be less understandable to other people than a high quality commercially available synthesised voice;
- may take a lot of effort to create;
- may not work with all communication software or platforms.

Tips to create the best possible personalised voice:

- Make sure the recordings are very high quality.
- You need a good microphone/sound card (not an inbuilt microphone for example) .
- You need a quiet environment (that is the same each time).
- Try and speak in a consistent way; same rate and volume each time.
- Try not to record while tired.

Model Talker: www.modeltalker.org

Model Talker is a service run by an American research lab. ModelTalker creates a personalised voice that can be used on the main computer systems. You will need to record 1600 sentences. Creating the voice is free (supported by the research project).

To build a voice visit: <https://www.modeltalker.org/build-your-voice/>

You can also now directly record your voice into the Predictable communication software (www.therapy-box.co.uk/modeltalker.aspx).

My Own Voice (Acapela) www.acapela-group.com/voices/voice-replacement/

MyOwnVoice is a newer (2014) service offered by Acapella, a commercial speech synthesis company. It is free to create the voice, but there is a charge (not specified) to then download and use it on a computer. It also appears to be limited to Windows or Android devices / communication software. You will need to record about 1600 sentences.

To create a MyOwnVoice voice, to test, visit: www.acapela-group.com/voices/voice-replacement/

Other Synthesised Voices

Many high quality, non personalised, synthesised voices now exist, and can be used with communication software, for example: <https://www.cereproc.com/en/products/voices> or <http://www.acapela-group.com/>