

HOW TO BE A VENTRILOQUIST

A Beginner's Guide To The Art Of Ventriloquism

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Before You Begin These Ventriloquism Lessons

I want to stress that it takes time to learn, practice and master the skills of ventriloquism. Do not rush the learning process. It will only frustrate you later on.

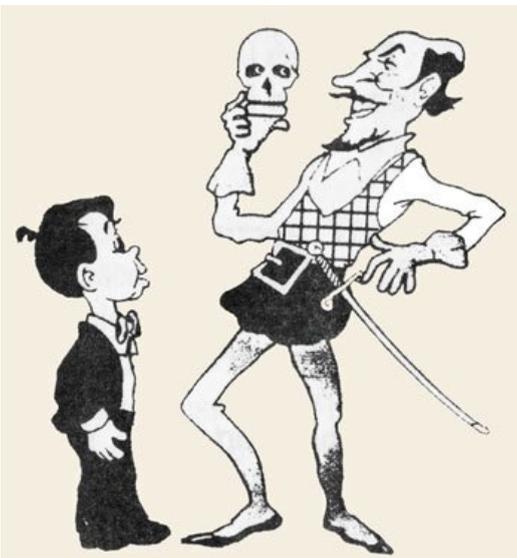
IMPORTANT:

When practicing ventriloquism, do not strain your voice. Short periods of practice throughout the day (even just a minute or two) are much better than one long extended practice. As you continue, your muscles will strengthen and you will be able to practice for longer periods.

LESSON ONE:

How good a ventriloquist you become depends on you. If you practice and listen to our advice, there is no reason you couldn't be the next Jeff Dunham, Terry Fator, Darci Lynne or Nina Conti. The effort on your part will be fun because your ventriloquist puppet pal will keep you company during study and practice.

Don't have a puppet pal? Check out our [Beginner Puppet Tutorial](#) and you can make your own!



To be a Ventriloquist you must be an actor.

A ventriloquist has two parts to play. The part of himself (or herself) and the part the vent figure (dummy) or puppet. You will act as one person and you will make your puppet act as the other. When you are a good actor/ventriloquist, people will feel as though they are actually watching two people having a conversation.

There are two primary types of ventriloquism: Near and Distant.

When the ventriloquist holds a puppet or figure on his knee, lap, or on a vent stand next to himself and makes it appear as though the figure is alive, this is called "Near Ventriloquism."

If the ventriloquist is standing on one side of the stage and makes it sound as if the figure is calling from its suitcase or trunk, which is sitting on the opposite side of the stage, this is called "Distant Ventriloquism."

Both are considered throwing the voice by the layperson.

This tutorial will teach you Near Ventriloquism.

How far can the voice be thrown?

Ventriloquism is to the ear what magic is to the eye. Both are made possible through misdirection. The magician uses misdirection to cause the audience to see what he wants them to see. Ventriloquism also requires misdirecting the audience's sight.

The human ear has difficulty accurately judging the direction of sound. Knowing this, the ventriloquist creates the illusion with some acting, words, or gestures that direct the audience's attention to the place he wants them to believe the sound was produced.

When you watch television, does the sound actually come from the actors' mouths? No, it comes from a speaker. Because the video and sound match perfectly (in most cases) you pay no attention to the fact the sound originates elsewhere. You "believe" the image of the actor on the screen is actually talking.

The same is true for the ventriloquist. The voice comes from you. When you do this without moving your lips and sync the puppet's mouth to the words, the audience will start to believe the puppet is talking.

(There is more to it than that – but this is how it starts.)

One person talking for two?

As a ventriloquist you must sound like two people having a conversation. First we'll discuss your responsibility as the ventriloquist. Then we'll turn our attention to your puppet partner. Remember:

- Both voices in the conversation must be spoken with a clear voice.
- The voices must be different.
- And the conversation must be believable.

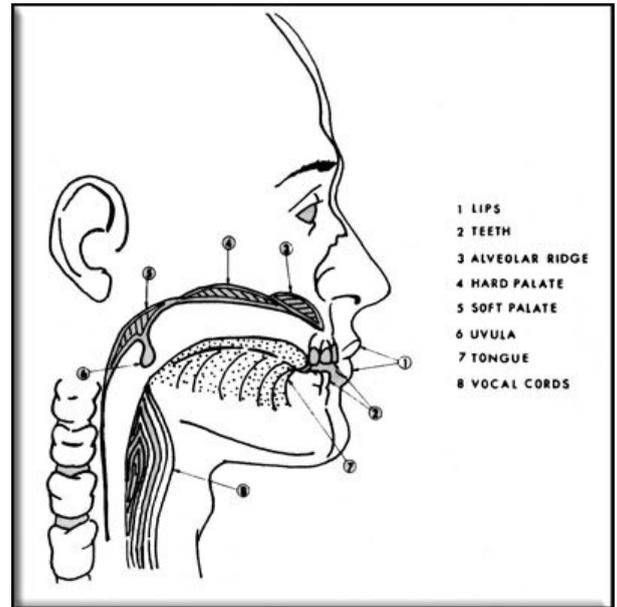
Vocal Clarity

There's nothing more frustrating than hearing someone say something, but not understanding what they said. In ventriloquism, if the audience can't understand you, they won't laugh at your jokes or respond. They may grow restless and lose interest.

Here are several tips to speaking clearly:

1. Breathe Control
2. Using a resonance voice
3. Practice

Let's start by exploring the inside of your mouth.



Start with the tip of your tongue at the back of your upper teeth, move your tongue back and up along the roof of your mouth. You will feel a point where the tongue passes over a hump and suddenly moves upward. This bump you feel just in back of your upper teeth is called the “Alveolar Ridge.” The Alveolar Ridge will play an important part in your ability to speak ventriloquially without moving your lips.

The front portion of the roof of your mouth, just behind the Alveolar Ridge, has a hard surface called the “Hard Palate.” Sound is produced by vibrations and this portion of your mouth acts as a sounding board. Your tongue touches the Alveolar Ridge and Hard Palate to form these various sounds.

You do all this without thought when you speak. But now as you begin to study ventriloquism, you must learn to use these features.

Say the following words and listen to the sound of the vowels:

- A as in Cat
- E as in Get
- I as in Pin
- O as in Cot
- U as in Put

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Say them several times and notice that the middle part of your tongue changes positions with the various vowel sounds. This changing of positions governs the vibrations of air you force from your throat. The tongue assists as a sounding board, helping to make these sounds.

The action of your tongue during speech is continually changing position and shape to govern the amount of sound vibrations. This changes the tone allowing you to create words.

If you run the tip of your tongue over the roof of your mouth from front to rear, you will feel the point where the roof of your mouth becomes soft. The soft portion is called the Soft Palate. It is a continuation of the Hard Palate. You may even be able to feel where the soft palate ends in two veil-like fleshy arches, the Palatine Arches. The thickness of the soft palate and the palatine arches also change from vowel to vowel as they are spoken. All without any conscious effort on your part.

In the center of your throat, directly in the middle of the arch opening in the back, hangs the uvula. The uvula becomes vital during speech production. It rises for the vowels and lowers for the consonants and resonant sounds.

When you say a sound such as “*ahh*,” you’ll notice that your uvula curls upward to open the throat wide so the tone flows freely with pureness and volume. On the word CAT, however, your tongue and uvula team up to first block the back of the throat in preparation for the explosive C, and then immediately pull away to open the throat fully for the smooth flow of breath carrying the sound of the A, which is immediately followed by the action of the tip of your tongue instantly stopping the vowel sound when it presses in an instant against the alveolar ridge for the sharp sound of T. Only three letters, yet saying the word requires more than three distinct actions of your tongue and uvula. Wow! (Notice how your tongue gets totally out of the way when you say “Wow,”? But what happened with your lips?)

Now let’s talk about the large cartilage known as the Adam’s Apple. Touch your throat at the point where you feel your Adam’s Apple (and with some people it is more easily felt than on others).



Directly behind your Adam’s Apple is your Larynx which houses your Vocal Cords or voice box.

If you place your fingers on your Adam’s Apple and say “*zzzzzzzzzzzz*” you will feel the “buzz” or vibration. It is made by the flow of breath through your vocal cords producing tone inside your throat. Now say “*ooooooooo*” and you will likely feel the vibrations from this sound as well.

The vocal cords lie horizontally within the larynx. They have tiny lips, which assume different positions as each sound is formed. Have you ever tried slitting a piece of grass or reed and then blew through it to make a whistle? The air passing through the reed causes it to vibrate which makes the sound. The same is true of the vocal cords. And the Adam’s Apple with it’s neighboring cavities form the resounding body.

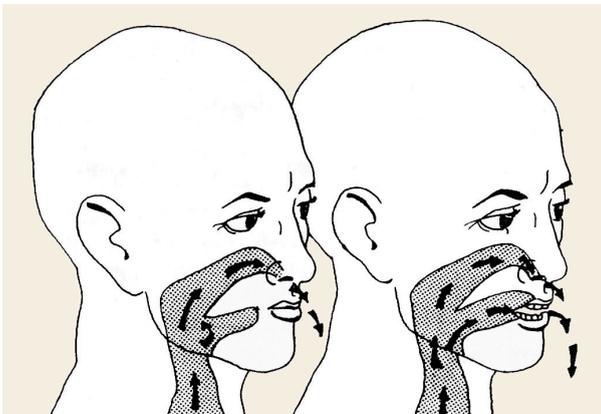
Breath passes from the lungs to the back of the throat through the trachea, more commonly called the windpipe. When your breath reaches the back of your throat it comes to the Palatine arch where the Uvula either lifts to let the vowel sound flow freely through the mouth, or the tongue and uvula team up to divert the resonant tones (such as M, N, and NG) upward into the resonant chambers and then out through the nose.

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You have resonance chambers located throughout your nose and head. Humming sounds take the greatest advantage of these. Hum while holding the sides of your nose gently. Feel the vibrations of sound tingling through your nose and cheeks? The task of the resonators is very important for normal speech, but the quality they add to the ventriloquial voice is even more important. It allows the sound to be carried further and sound clearer!

A pleasing resonance in the voice depends on a properly balanced flow of the two breath streams used in the natural voice.

Two breath streams?



One stream of breath flows through the nose. This is the Upper Breath Stream. The other breath stream flows through the mouth and it is called the Lower Breath Stream.

It is important that we are able to distinguish resonance in our normal voice so it may be applied to our ventriloquial voice.

Let's take a closer look at the three primary sounds that provide resonance: "M", "N", and "NG." When you say these sounds, whether alone or as part of a word, there will always be an underlying "hum" or "singing tone" in your speech.

Humming is an excellent way to place the resonant voice properly. The hum starts the vibrations first in the Upper Breath Stream. While you are humming, all sound is carried through your nose by the upper breath stream. No sound comes from your mouth.

You can prove this by pinching your nose shut while humming. What happens? The sound ceases because there is no way for the upper breath stream to escape. Your lips were already closed to form the hum, and then when you closed your nasal passages for a moment, all air passages are closed along with sound carried by the flow of air.

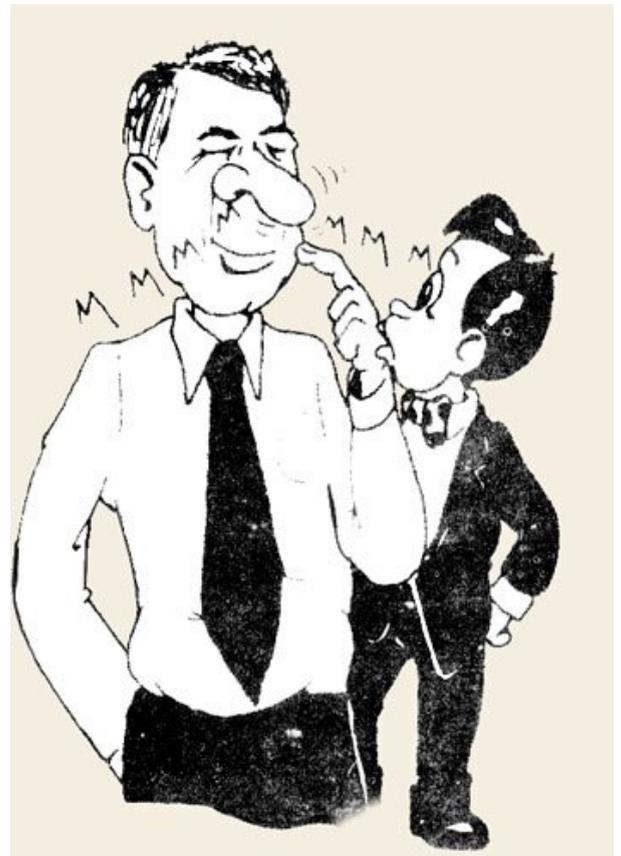
Humming is the best way to position the resonant voice ...

If you will alternate the sounds of "M" and "N" on a gentle hum, you will begin to feel the vibrations through your nose and forehead:

Mmmmm... Nnnnn... Mmmmm... Nnnnn...

Can you feel a tingle on the tip of your tongue as you make these sounds? The tingle is caused by the continuous flow of vibrations.

Resonant "M"



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Now hum the sound of the letter “M” with your lips for a second or two, then break of the hum by saying the word “Mom” followed by resuming the continuous hum of “M”:

Mmmmm-oMmmmm

Focus the point of the M sound at your lips, using your lips alone to form the humming sound as well as formation of the word. Repeat the exercise and keep it going as long as you can on a single breath. Be sure to “lift” the hum out of your throat, forward to your lips, and then up into your head where the hum can escape through your nose.

When this is being done properly you should feel a tickling sensation at your lightly closed lips.

Be sure to take deep breaths before you do these humming exercises. Bring your breath up from your stomach area, using the diaphragm muscle and not just your chest alone.

Try these sounds in your normal voice and natural speech. Use your lips freely:

Hum, hum, Bumble bee:

Hum, hum, hum.

Draw out and hold the sound of the “M” and repeat the exercise focusing your emphasis on the letter “M.”

Resonant “N”

The consonant “N” also has a vibrating sound. The “N” does not require the lips for pronunciation so it is an easy sound for the ventriloquist. In our natural speech we form the “N” by placing the tip of our tongue against the Alveolar Ridge. (Notice what happens to your tongue when you say “N.” You may again feel added vibration through the roof of your mouth. That is the resonance of this letter.

In ventriloquial speech, while maintaining the ventriloquist mouth position with your lips still, you will find you can say the letter “N” quite easily.

Here are some phrases to try. Start with your normal voice, then also practice with your puppet’s voice. Be certain to hold your ventriloquist mouth position, otherwise, your jaw will want to drop as you begin the formation of the letter “N.”

Niminy nim is a nice little man,

Niminy nim sings when he can,

Niminy nim, nim, nim.

This exercise combined the sounds of “M” and “N” and if repeated from time to time will add quality and resonance to all of your speech.

Resonant “NG”

The “NG” resonant sound is found in these words:

Sting, ring, wrong, rung,

Notice what those words have in common? The resonant sound is made by combining the “N” and the “G” into “NG.” The “NG” is always preceded by a vowel. The vowel changes the tone for that particular word but the tone of the “NG” hum is always the same in all words, a hum made when the middle/back of the tongue is pressed against the roof of the mouth.

With the tongue positioned like that, the lower breath stream is blocked, forcing the sound up into the nose and out through the nostrils.

Here are some more words containing the resonant letter combination “NG” for you to say.:

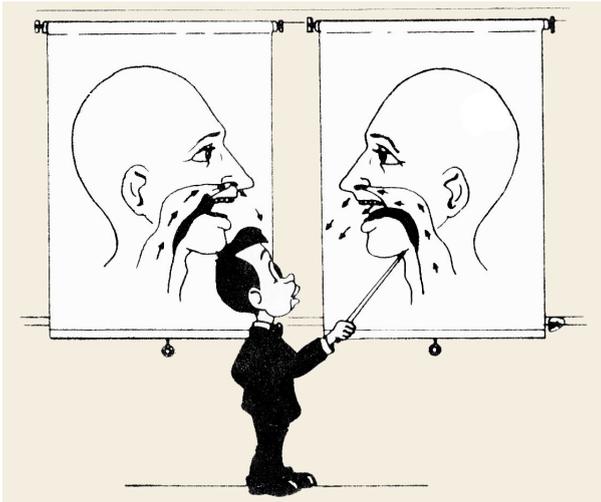
Sang, sing, song, sung

Now, here is a final “NG” word for you to try:

Morning

Say it slowly, this word contains all three resonant sounds. **M-or-N-i-NG**. So, tomorrow when you greet someone with the popular greeting, "*Good morning*," you will have used all three resonant sounds!

By now you are wondering why we spent much of this lesson focused on how our voice is produced.



Ventriloquism is voice production.

By improving your understanding of vocal production, it will help make you a better ventriloquist.

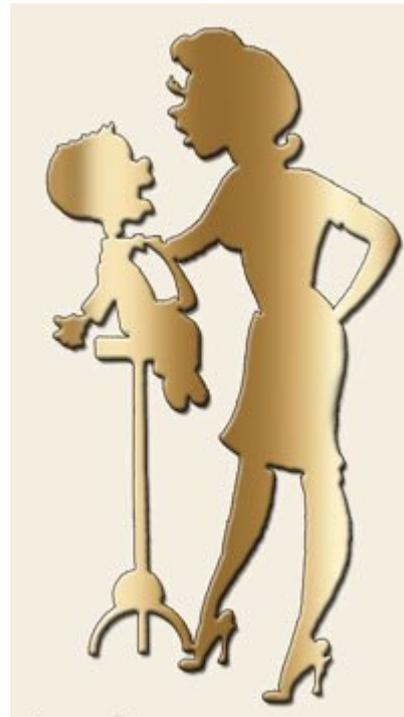
Now it is time to start working on your ventriloquial voice.

Lesson Two: The Ventriloquial Voice

Voice Contrast Is Vital!

When a ventriloquist performs, you should be able to close your eyes and know which voice belongs to the ventriloquist and which voice belongs to the puppet. The voices must be distinctly different.

There are several ways to create voice contrast.



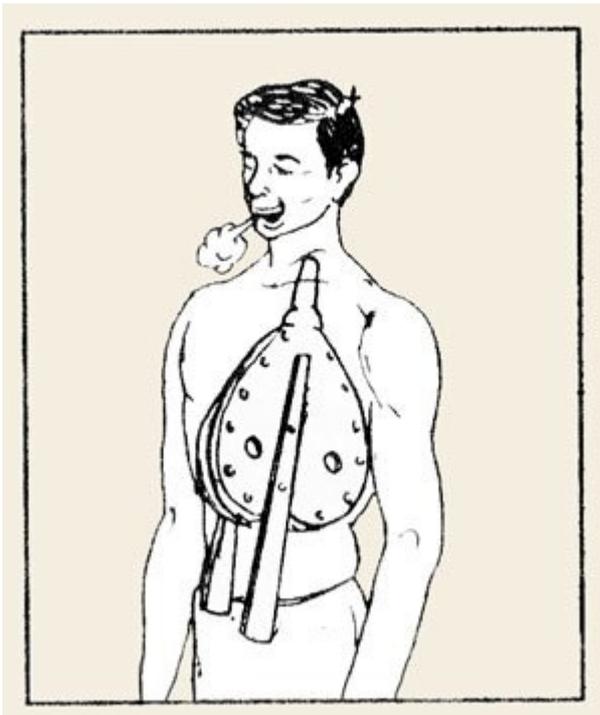
Start by using the musical scale to set the tone just as you would in singing: "*Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti, Do*." Sing the notes first so you hear them distinctly. Then start again with "Do". Sing the note and in that key, say a phrase such as "*This is the voice very low*." Sing the next note on the scale, then say "*This is the voice one note higher*." Continue by saying this sentence on each individual tone level. Continue moving up the scale one note higher every time, until you feel that tone strains your throat. Then, drop down one note from the tone which caused the strain.

Use a tape recorder or video camera to record your practice. By listening to the recording you will be able to hear the variety of change in tone. You will then be able to produce contrast in your speech.

Other ways to produce contrast include: tempo of words, vocabulary, dialects, inflection of speech and volume. When combined with tone and pitch, the variety of character voices possible is astounding.

Once you have a character voice, you should practice in that voice. This will help you to master the voice and lip control at the same time.

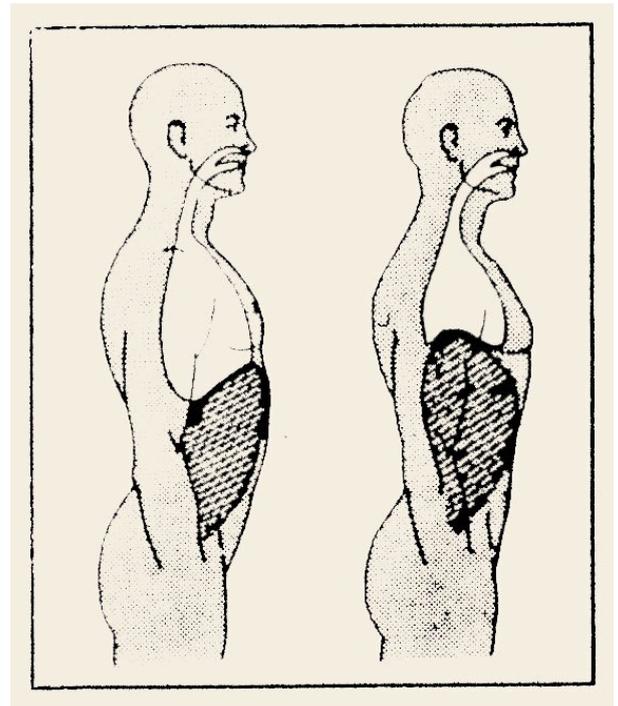
Breathing and Breath Control



Our lungs are like bellows. They power the air supply necessary for speech. In fact, proper breathing is the foundation of good speech. Since ventriloquism is speech, then we could say, "proper breathing is the foundation for ventriloquism."

Deep breathing is the key.

Most people are "shallow breathers" using only the upper portion of their lungs. This is a habit that should and can be overcome. It's not how much air you take in, but how deeply you take it in. Just below the lungs is the diaphragm, a muscular body partition you will use to control the amount of breath that is exhaled for speech. Controlling the diaphragm and abdominal muscles is important to the ventriloquist.



When we inhale (breathe in) the diaphragm tightens and flattens while the abdominal muscles relax and bulge below the rib cage. When we exhale (breathe out), just the opposite happens, the diaphragm presses upward while the abdominal (stomach) muscles assist by pulling inward.

The diaphragm and abdominal muscles work as a team with each breath. When one tightens, the other relaxes, each helping the other with the task of breathing. But, if you take a breath and hold it, you are tightening both the muscles of the diaphragm and the stomach, setting them in opposition to one another. The secret of ventriloquist breath control lies in the strength of these opposing muscles.

The stomach and diaphragm muscles, along with the lungs, keep air pressure constant while it flows through our throat and vocal cords to produce our voice. Therefore, the more deeply you breathe and the stronger your abdominal muscles, the greater control you will have over your ventriloquial voice.

Here is an exercise you can use daily to expand your breathing capacity:

Stand up straight and breathe in slowly through your nose. Inhale as much air as your lungs can hold. Hold the air for a moment and then breathe in a bit more. You should feel a slight strain across your chest. Now slowly let the air out in a controlled note. Make the note last as long as you can.

This will help expand your breathing capacity.

Some people may have breathing or other physical limitations that make it impossible for them to do this exercise. Do not let that hinder your study and desire to become a ventriloquist. If you are able to speak normally, you will be able to speak ventriloquially. If an exercise is not possible, simply move on in your lessons.

Most students want to learn ventriloquism as quickly as possible. From experience we know it is faster and easier to learn if we spend this extra time now preparing ourselves. Too often beginners are tempted to take shortcuts, and by so doing bad habits are developed which have to be “unlearned” at a later date.



Exaggerate?

Some people have very little lip movement or facial expression when they speak normally. But for ventriloquism, we want as much movement and expression as possible during our own speech. Almost with a touch of exaggeration. The greater the movement of lips and jaw for your own speech, the greater the contrast with the still lips and motionless face during ventriloquial speech.

It is important that you be visually expressive during your portion of the ventriloquist dialogue, so practice being enthusiastic and expressive.

At the same time, never forget that you must still be present when the puppet is “talking.” Many amateurs concentrate so hard on what the puppet is doing they become motionless when it is talking. That isn’t normal. You must work to keep the puppet moving while you talk, and you must remain in motion while the puppet talks.

The Ventriloquist Mouth Position

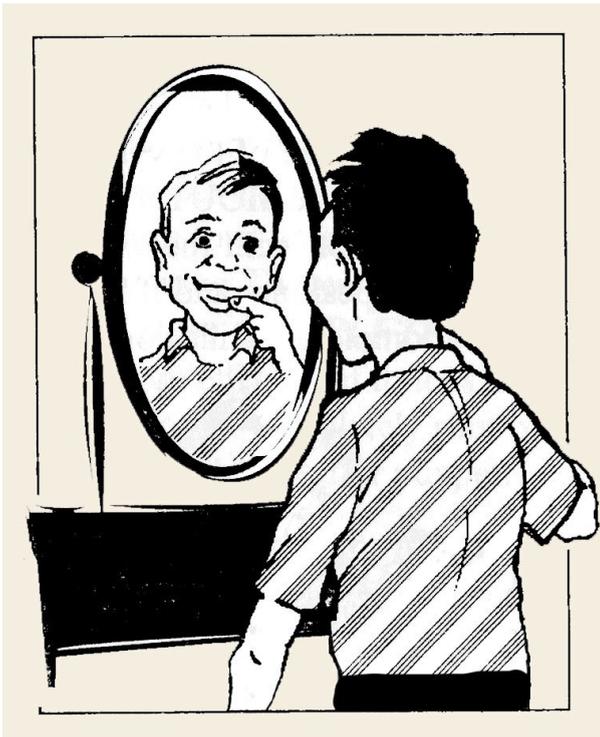
Because everyone’s mouth characteristics such as the shape of your jaw, position of teeth, etc. is different, the ventriloquist mouth position will not be exactly the same for everyone.

Here are some general guidelines to follow.

A ventriloquist does not talk with the mouth closed.

Words cannot come from our mouth when the lips are pressed together. Your lips must always be slightly parted in a position that is natural in appearance for ventriloquist speech.

Do not talk with your teeth clenched together!



Your teeth must be slightly parted as well, so the sound can pass through freely without the feeling that you are forcing the words through your teeth.

Close your jaw and mouth into your normal “bite” position with the teeth touching. Leave your lips parted slightly in a position natural in appearance. Now, drop the jaw just enough for your teeth to separate slightly, no more than one-fourth inch. With your mouth in this Ventriloquist Mouth Position, take a close look at your reflection in a mirror. Look at your lips; feel the position of your jaw and teeth. Make a mental note of these so you can assume this position of your mouth at will. Become conscious of the muscles involved in this so you can begin gaining control of them.

The jaw should be held firmly but not rigidly for the Ventriloquist Mouth Position. If your jaw is rigid, too much energy goes to control the jaw and you will not have proper control of the mouth and lips. If the jaw is completely relaxed, your lips may be motionless but you will lose proper control of the jaw. If the jaw is simply held firmly you will have proper control.

Some ventriloquists are concerned that people will see their tongue move inside their mouth when the teeth are parted slightly. The truth is, few viewers will even be looking at the ventriloquist’s mouth more than momentarily when there is an active, comical puppet alongside. The puppet or vent figure gets the attention!

Assume the ventriloquist mouth position and say, “*yes, no, yes, no.*” That was easy, wasn’t it? Now try saying, “*yep, nope, yep, nope.*” Can’t do it? Because of the letter P, those words are impossible to say unless the lips touch on each word.

“B, F, M, P, V, and W.” are labial letters. All other sounds of the alphabet can be said quite easily without lip movement, but these six are “trouble makers” for any ventriloquist.

We will start with the simple sounds and then work our way to the more difficult ones.

Lesson Three: Learning Lip Control

It is time to practice in front of a mirror. Assume the Ventriloquist Mouth Position, hold your jaw motionless and begin with the Ventriloquist’s Alphabet. This is all of the letters except the labials:

A, C, D, E, G, H, I, J, K, L, N, O, Q, R,
S, T, U, X, Y, Z



When you see movement of lips or jaw, make a mental note of how that movement felt. Soon you will be able to determine when they move just by how your face feels.

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Always try to say the your letters and words as clearly and distinctly as possible. At this stage you are going for clarity, not speed. Speak slowly and sound out the letters while making sure your lips and jaw do not move.

After repeating the Ventriloquist's Alphabet several more times, move your jaw and lips without words just to relax a bit. Then repeat the entire exercise.

Continue to practice until you can say all 20 letters without any trace of lip or jaw movement. To gain complete control over these letters you should practice this exercise daily.

Speaking with the Ventriloquial Mouth Position, try saying these sentences:

He said, "Hello, how are you?"

I said, "Just great, thank you."

We've used only easy letters so you will be able to concentrate on keeping your lips and jaw still as you say the sentences. Don't think you are finished just saying them once or twice. You must continue to practice every day. Even the pros practice daily.

If you continue to have problems with lip movement, or you don't have a mirror to practice with, here is another tip:

Use a pencil!

A pencil held loosely between the lips will allow you to feel when the lips move.

Here are some other easy sentences to practice with:

Ask us early to try tasty chili.

He's too old to go out in the cold.

You could do this, too, dude!

These phrases should be practiced three ways:

1. Your Natural Speech,
2. With use of the pencil, and
3. In the Ventriloquist mouth position in your puppet's voice.

Now let's try holding a conversation with yourself. Your lines will start with a V for Ventriloquist. F starts the lines of your Figure or Puppet. This is great practice to help you switch back and forth between your voice and your puppet's voice.

V: Good morning.

F: Did you have a good night's rest?

V: I did, thank you.

F: What's next on your schedule?

V: I think I'll shower, brush my hair.

F: Oh, great! Are you going to sing in the shower?

V: I might.

F: Oh, good, will you use MY voice, please?

V: Why?

F: You need the practice. And by the way, when you brush your hair...

V: Yes?

F: Use the mirror to check our ventriloquist mouth position.

V: Our mouth position?

F: What's *yours* is also *mine*, you know!

Let your lips move as needed at this point. But keep your jaw still. Keep your voice forward in your mouth and pronounce each word as clearly as you can without jaw movement. Use a mirror or touch your fingers lightly to your chin to detect jaw movement. Stop on any word that caused your jaw to move and repeat the word until you are able to say it without any movement.



Practice often, pick up a newspaper, book, your homework or office work and read it aloud using your ventriloquial voice and mouth position.

As you read or talk aloud in your vent voice using the ventriloquial mouth position, you can try to form the words without the use of your lips, but this will be impossible (for now) on words that contain the labials: *P, B, V, F, M, and W*. That's okay, let your lips move when necessary to say the word clearly and distinctly.

The goal at this point is to be able to notice how your tongue moves so you can speak easily and clearly in your ventriloquial voice. You want to be understood even when your jaw is held stationary and your mouth is in the ventriloquist mouth position.

Again, record these sessions so you can listen and correct any words you have a problem with.

Lesson Four: Getting Started With Sound Substitutions

The Letter Q:

The letter Q is pronounced "Cue" in English. That can easily be said without moving the lips. But the letter changes its sound in words. For example, say:

Quaint, quarry, quill, quest, quickly, quality, quit.

The sound of "Qu" is phonetically "kw." The lips don't need to touch, but they do want to pucker. Keeping the jaw from dropping on the words that contain letters "Qu" takes extra concentration.

Dictionaries will give the pronunciation of "quarry" as: kwor-é. Simply replace "qu" with "koo" (rhymes with "too"). Try it:

Quarry = koo-or-ee ("ee" as in "see")

Here are some more Q words:

Quite = koo-ite

Quit = koo-it

Quiet = koo-i-et

Quality = koo-al-ity

The Letter W

When you say "W" your lips are required to touch. That is because the sound of saying the letter includes a B (Dou-Ble-U). However you will seldom be saying the letter alone unless your puppet is reciting the alphabet, or you are saying names, etc. For example:

A & W Root Beer, George W. Bush

Most frequently "W" will be found as part of a word formation: Say the following sentence aloud in your natural voice:

When will Wild Willie work westward toward the wilderness?

On each word, “W” causes your lips to form into a circular formation. We do that in order to add force to the breath that immediately follows carrying the vowel. It also changes the tone of these unique consonant and vowel combinations.

You can do this without puckering your lips and still achieve the proper sound for the word. Instead of using a “W” in the word, use the sound of “oo” as in the word “too.” We can call it a substitute sound or alternate sound, but really it is simply a matter of saying “W” with your tongue instead of your lips.

Try the above sentence in your ventriloquist voice using oo in place of the W:

oo-en oo-ill oo-ild oo-illie oo-ork oo-est oo-ard to oo-ard the oo-ildreness?

Say the words slowly and listen carefully to the sound of each word. Make it clear and distinct so you hear the sound of the “W” although your lips don’t move. Then repeat them, saying them faster, letting the sound flow smoothly, connecting the sounds as one word.

When a w ends a word, the sound again changes:

Yellow = yell – oh

What about the many words where WH commonly appear as a combination?

What, when, where, why?

To make the “wh” sound correctly you must think of the letters reversed to “hw.” The breath sound of “H” precedes the “W” which is exactly what happens when we say the word in our natural speech.

Try these for ventriloquial speech:

What = Huh-oo-at (Think “Huh-wat”)

When = Huh-oo-en (Think “Huh-wen”)

Whistle = Huh-oo-istle (Think: “Huh-wistle”)

While – Huh-oo-ile (Think “Huh-wile”)

The secret is to make the “Huh—oo” as one instantaneous sound that flows immediately into the vowel that follows.

Lesson Five: Labial Substitutions

Now it is time to tackle the labials ...

The letters “P,” “B,” “M,” “F,” and “V” are considered the more difficult labials by most ventriloquists. We will teach you to deal with these labials by substituting another consonant with similar sound.

These substitute or alternate letters are only meant to be a place to begin.

There is actually a way to say these letters without moving your lips. Trying to teach that here would be extremely difficult. For more advanced instruction we recommend the [Learn-Ventriloquism Course](#).

Some labials have more than one substitute letter so you can experiment and determine which one works best for you. There is no one right or wrong method. If you talk to several ventriloquists, you will find some who enunciate the labials one way and some a different way. You’ll quickly discover which is easiest and best for you, and for you this will then be the “perfect” method!

You may hear or feel the substitute labial, but most of your audience will not! Your audience hears the intended words. They are not ventriloquists so they do not listen to determine what you are doing to achieve ventriloquist speech. They may think something doesn’t sound quite right, but they are focused on listening to the conversation.

“F” and “V”

“F” and “V” require the use of the lower lip with an assist from the upper teeth for natural speech. There are actually several ways to create these sounds, which are very similar.

Say the letter “F” aloud in your normal speaking voice to hear how it sounds and feel your tongue and lip as the letter is formed.

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You should hear a vocal “eh” carried by breath flow until your lower lip moved upward and touched the edge of your upper teeth, breaking the breath flow for a milli-second. That is how “F” is formed normally.

Remember that many words and phrases can be changed from labial-rich to non- labial without losing any of their meaning or effectiveness. Why slur the words of “*Peanut Butter Sandwich*” when “*Jelly Sandwich*” would work just as well? Or, you can say “*Great day,*” or “*Wonderful day,*” in place of “*Beautiful morning.*”

To slur or not to slur...

Some sources that teach ventriloquism suggest it is permissible to slur the labial substitutes if you cannot say them distinctly. It is **NOT** recommended. Why slur your ventriloquist speech when clear and distinct diction is possible without the use of your lips?

Ventriloquists who are willing to settle for less than their best in this one area have a tendency to accept less than the best from themselves in other areas of their entertainment performance as well. Learn to say even the most difficult of words distinctly.

Remember that while a word containing one of the labials may be difficult to say alone, it becomes much easier when it is a part of an entire sentence. The single word will flow into the sentence of words smoothly and naturally.

To say the single letter “F” ventriloquially, we’ll ask our tongue to substitute for the action of the lip, and use the “eth” sound. Try it in your ventriloquist voice and mouth position:

“Eth” (as in “Ethel” or “ethnic ”)

Eth (Eth-el), Eth (eth-nic), Eth, Eth, Eth

This is how we say “F” as the name of the letter. However, you will find that the sound of “F” changes when it is combined with other letters to form a word:

Fred found a few Fall flowers.

To say this sentence:

Substitute the “Th” of “Thanks” or “Throw.”

Say them. Feel the force behind the “Th”?

Now, using this same “Th” as a replacement for “F,” say these words in your ventriloquist voice. Be sure your lower lip remains still and your tongue reaches up to touch the *backside* of your upper teeth to form the “Th” sound:

Th-red Th-ound a th-ew th-all th-lowers

You’ll also discover there is phonetic switch in other words such as:

Photo, Pharaoh, physician

Because Ph creates an F sound, these become:

Th-oto, Th-ar-oh, Th-si-shan

As I said, the letter “V” is closely related. For ventriloquist speech, simply replace the letter “V” with the softer “th” as found in the words: **the, that, or this.**

To say the letter “V,” substitute “th” as in the word “there.”

This softer “th” is pronounced with much less force.

Now, try saying the following sentence using the softer and smoother “th” as an alternate to the letter “V”:

Ventriloquists value velvet voices.

Ventriloquist = then-triloquist

value = thalue

velvet = thel-thet

voices = th-oices

“B”

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Before we cover the letter B, there is an important secret we must tell you up front. No matter what labial you say, or what substitution you use to say it, always think the letter (or sound) you are trying to make. This doesn't happen overnight. Initially you must give very concentrated thought to the alternate letters. But with practice, you will learn to use the substitution without thought. That is when you can begin to listen and think the letter for the sound you are trying to make. It will help improve your diction.

The two most popular alternate letters for a "B" used in ventriloquist speech are "D" and "G." For example:

Birthdays are the best!

You have at least two choices on how you can say this. If the letter "D" is substituted for "B" then you would say:

Dirthdays are the dest!

If the letter "G" is substituted for "B" you would say:

Girthdays are the gest!

You can also mix and match substitutions. Some ventriloquists find that when they say the word "Birthday" they achieve the most accurate sound for "B" by using the alternate letter "G."

Then, when saying the word "Best," they produce the most accurate sound for "B" by using the alternate letter "D." So the sentence would become:

"Girthdays are the Dest."

There is a third alternate for "B" taught by Bob Neller on his instructional audio: [Learn Ventriloquism](#). Neller was one of the most technically skilled performers of ventriloquism in his day. He had precise diction without a trace of lip movement. We recommend his instruction if you want to do further study of his unique method of pronouncing labials "B" and "P."

AND FINALLY, THAT PESKY "P"

"P" is a chameleon letter in that it is not always the same type of labial when used to spell words, and sometimes not a labial at all! Count the number of times the letter "P" appears in the following sentence:

"The Philadelphia pharmacist posing as a prominent physician was actually a phony psychic on parole!"

You will find the letter "P" nine times in this sentence. But here's the tricky part – how many times is it a labial? And which *labial sound*? Only *eight* times is it actually a labial. (The "P" of "psychic" is silent. . .the ventriloquist's favorite type of letter "P.")

And of the eight times where "P" is a labial, four of them are in the "Ph" tandem which is actually pronounced as the labial "F"!

Philadelphia, pharmacist, physician, and phony.

But here we will focus on the times when the labial is the hard "P" as found in our sample sentence four times:

posing, prominent and parole.

Most instruction says to *"Substitute the letter "T" or "K" for the letter "P" when speaking in the ventriloquist voice."*

In this case, these words would become:

Posing – T-osing or K-osing

Prominent – Tr-ominent or Krom-inent

Parole – Ta-role or Ka-role

Try this sentence:

I would like a piece of peach pie, please.

(I would like a kiece of keach kie, klease.)

or

(I would like a teice of teach tie *, tlease.)*

It will take a lot of work to make these substitutions sound right. To me, they never did. So let me again stress:

Learning to use a substitute letter for a labial letter is not the final goal.

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You must actually learn to accurately say the labial letter with your tongue. But you have to begin somewhere when learning to do this, and this is the easiest way.

So are you done? Not by a long shot if you want to do ventriloquism correctly!

Anyone interested in the art of ventriloquism can become a member of the [International Ventriloquist Society](#)! Members get access to videos, articles and other materials to help them learn more about ventriloquism and stay up-to-date with the community. To find out more about becoming a member, just click below:



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To learn more about the International Ventriloquist Society, please visit:
<https://VentriloquistSociety.com>

To learn more about the proper pronunciation of labial letters, please consider joining Tom's course at:
<https://Learn-Ventriloquism.com>

For more information, scripts and advance training, visit:
<https://MaherStudios.com>