



People are always asking me to repeat myself... What can I do?

First you must figure out what is causing this problem. Either you **mumble**, in which case your lips don't move, you have **lockjaw**, in which you lower jaw doesn't move, or you are just plain **soft-spoken**. Watch your mouth in a mirror and say something you know from memory; i.e. the words of a song, a poem, etc. Did you notice that there was little movement with either your lips or your jaw? If so, the following exercise can alleviate that problem:

Say the following nursery rhyme with the knuckle of your finger in your mouth.

*Bah, bah black sheep, have you any wool?
"Yes, Sir, yes Sir, three bags full;
One for the master, one for the dame,
And one for the little boy who lives down the lane."*

Now say the nursery rhyme again, except this time remove your knuckle. You should notice that your mouth will automatically begin to move because it doesn't want to be subjected to this exercise again! Practice this exercise several times each day. I guarantee you will notice a change.

If you have lockjaw, you are more than likely a woman and you are more than likely tense in your neck, throat and shoulder regions. You should be practicing relaxation exercises daily to help alleviate that stress. [Because I breathe with the support of my diaphragm, I don't carry any stress in my shoulders, my neck or my throat. My diaphragm takes the stress.]

If mumbling and lockjaw are not the problem, then you are soft-spoken. This is not an easy change because your inner ear (the ear by which you hear yourself) is extremely comfortable with your habitual volume. When I show my clients how to find the optimum pitch of the voice, their inner ear is quite accepting of the change; however, when I teach volume increase, the client's inner ear thinks he/she is shouting. Such is not the case.

In order to make the change, you will have to record your voice and a professional's voice (a radio or TV announcer) and compare the two recordings. You will need an external microphone for this. [If you have a hearing problem, chances are you speak loudly and listen to the radio/TV at a higher volume level than others. A family member or friend can give you some guidance as to what is a comfortable level for others.] If you are using a camcorder, position the mike about 6 feet from the speakers. After taping a portion of the professional's voice, tape yourself reading a brief paragraph, standing the same 6 feet from the mike. [Please note: the distance of the microphone to either your mouth or the speakers is dependent too on the type of microphone you are using. If, for example, you are using a handheld microphone, a distance of 12 – 18 inches will suffice. Whatever the distance, it must be the same for you and for the professional's voice.]

When you listen to the professional's voice in playback, make sure the volume level is set to a comfortable listening level. Now compare the two recordings. Is your volume level equal to that of the other voice or is it softer? More than likely it is softer. Practice increasing your volume to match that of the professional's volume. Your inner ear will fight you in the beginning because you will think you are shouting.

While this is one way of increasing your volume so that you are not constantly repeating yourself, an even more effective method is through voice training. Breathing with the support of your diaphragm and speaking at your optimum pitch is the best means of increasing your volume naturally without the possibility of being too loud. Supported breathing is the first thing we do in ***The Voice Dynamic Approach*** and it is the secret, not a trick or a tip, but a physical

activity that allows you to **control your volume**, eliminate breathlessness in public speaking, project without shouting, control nervousness on the podium, improve the sound of your speaking voice, be more dynamic in your delivery, and handle stress much more effectively.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry Daniels". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Henry" and last name "Daniels" clearly distinguishable.

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Tapping the full potential of the human voice