

Voice Banking

Voice banking makes it possible for people to use their own voice or something that sounds similar, when it becomes necessary to use a Speech Generating Device (SGD) to communicate. However, it is important to note that it is not the only option...

Voice Banking versus Message Banking versus Generic Voices

Voice banking is a process that allows a person to record a set list of phrases with their own voice. This recording is then converted to create a personal synthetic/artificial voice. The voice created will not be a perfect replica of the person's natural speech, but it will bear some resemblance, and has been deemed important by many people who have lost their voice and by their loved ones. The voice can be installed onto speech-generating communication devices to generate an infinite number of words and sentences.

Message Banking (or Phrase Banking) is the process of recording some personally meaningful phrases, sentences, and expressions in one's natural speaking voice while it is still intact. These whole messages can then be saved onto a communication device, so that a person can convey the stored message with the press of one button. These recorded messages preserve the unique characteristics of a person's voice such as their intonation and inflection. This means that **only** the exact phrases that were recorded will be played with your natural voice. For more information on Message/Phrase Banking, please see our other Tip of the Month.

Dozens of **generic voices** have been created and installed within phones and communication software. These have come a long way since the days of Stephen Hawking's chosen voice, and are available in a range of languages, accents, and ages. Some people choose to use a generic voice because:

- It saves them time
- Their voice has already deteriorated, and the voice banking will not capture their voice, as the person and their family best remembers it
- Spending hours recording their voice may be effortful for them

What do you need?

- A laptop or computer running Windows 7 or Mac OSX 10.9 or higher
- A broadband internet connection
- A high-quality USB headset with microphone
- A healthy or minimally affected voice

What is involved in Voice Banking?

There are now a range of companies that offer voice banking, and all of them can be done in the privacy of your own home. Whilst you do not need a TalkLink Speech Language Therapist to get started or to guide you through the process, we can provide technical assistance, support and recording equipment if necessary (if you have a referral).

- The Voice Keeper can make a voice with a minimum of 50 sentences however they recommend recording as many as you can (up to 300 sentences). Their voices can be used in iOS text-to-speech apps such as TouchChat, LAMP, and Dialogue AAC, and communication software such as Grid 3 and Communicator 5. You can even create your Voice Keeper voice directly onto the free Voice Keeper app.

- Acapela (my-own-voice) allows you to create a synthetic voice with 50-300 sentences that can be recorded on their website. Alternatively, if a person has already message banked 300 phrases, they can upload them into Acapela and a synthesised voice can be created. This can be used on Windows communication software, Accent and Novachat devices, and on the apps Predictable and Proloquo4text.
- Speak Unique can build a voice with a minimum of 150 sentences, and they allow you to choose the genre, the book, and the reading level that you want to read for your recordings. Speak Unique also offer a 'Voice Repair' service, which would be appropriate for people whose speech is already moderately impaired. The voice can be used on the text-to-speech app Speak Unique and on Windows communication software.
- Modeltalker is one of the most established voice banking services. They require a minimum of 800 sentences of recording which is equivalent to at least 24 hours of recording time. Modeltalker voices can be used on the Predictable app, Accent devices and on Windows communication software (Grid 3, Tobii Dynavox).

Most companies offer a one-time fee or an annual subscription to use your voice. TalkLink may be able to assist with funding for people with degenerative diseases, cancers or other conditions that result in the loss of one's voice. All of the voice banking services have various samples of the voices they have created, and we encourage you to listen to the range of voices.

References:

MND Association (UK) <https://www.mndassociation.org/professionals/management-of-mnd/aac-for-mnd/voice-banking/>

The Voice Keeper <https://www.thevoicekeeper.com/>

Speak Unique <https://www.speakunique.co.uk/overview/>

Acapela (my-own-voice) <https://www.acapela-group.com/voices/voice-banking/>

Modeltalker <https://www.modeltalker.org/>

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