

## **Becoming a Ventriloquist in 5 easy steps**

Ventriloquism is not the art of “throwing” your voice. It is the “appearance” or “illusion” of your voice coming from a distance or another object. The more active or animated the puppet or object, the greater the illusion that the sound is coming from somewhere other than the Ventriloquist.

All you need to get started is an inexpensive puppet from a department store or thrift shop. If you are handy with a marker, needle and thread, a sock will do. You simply need something with a moveable mouth.

### **Step One: The Basics of Lip Movement**

You won't even need a puppet to get started, just a room without distractions and preferably in front of a mirror. Begin by speaking the alphabet in your normal voice with normal mouth and lip movement. As you speak the alphabet, make a mental note or underline/circle each letter that requires you to place your lips together or move them noticeably.

A – B – C – D – E – F – G – H – I – J – K – L – M

N – O – P – Q – R – S – T – U – V – W – X – Y – Z

Repeat the process two or three times to fully understand which letters create the most lip movement.

These are the letters that you should have underlined or circled

B – F – M – P – V – W – Y

We will address how to say or substitute these letters as we go.

### **Step Two: The Ventriloquist's Alphabet**

Now say the alphabet shown below. There are letters missing, so be careful to announce only the letters shown.

A – C – D – E – G – H – I – J – K – L

N – O – Q – R – S – T – U – X – Z

This is known as the “Ventriloquists alphabet”. These are the letters that are the easiest to pronounce without moving your lips, or at least with very little movement of your lips or mouth.

Now, with a slight smile and your lips slightly open, repeat the above Ventriloquist alphabet in your normal voice, and try not to move your lips. Using your tongue at the roof of your mouth will help annunciation on some letters such as D, G, J, N, T, Z. Repeat the above letters several times, concentrating on not moving your lips.

When you are comfortable with this, try repeating the sentences below:

“This is going to get easier as long as I try harder”  
“Little Sally is going to the store to get candy and soda”  
“I don’t like to eat sausage”  
“I should say it is a good day to stay in the house”  
“Did you go to the store yet today?”  
“Is that your dog?”  
“Did you see the clouds in the sky?”  
“How do you do that so easily?”  
“I think I like to eat out at lunch”

You can practice your Ventriloquism at anytime by reading a book, magazine or newspaper or signs that you see everyday.

Practice does not make perfect, it makes a habit. So get into the habit of practicing your ventriloquism.

### **Step 3 Trouble Letters and sounds**

Now say the remaining letters of the alphabet below and notice how much lip movement there is and the type of movement it takes to announce them. These are the letters that you should have underlined or circled in step 1.

B – F – M – P – V – W – Y

You will notice the trouble letters cause the most lip movement, but that does not mean they have to be avoided completely. You will learn to replace these trouble letters with “sound alike” letters.

B’s and P’s can often be replaced with D’s or T’s. The sound is usually quite close, or adds some comedy to the routine. For instance: Principal could be pronounced as Trincidal, by replacing the P with the T or D sound.

F’s can also be replaced with the ”Th” sound. The word “funny” would be pronounced “Thunny”. Again this is either not noticed by your audience or adds a bit of comedy as they listen to the puppet speak.

M’s can be replaced with the “N” sound

Victory becomes Thictory, replacing the V with the Th sound

The word “why”, is actually pronounced by using an “oh” and “T” sound together. Say “oh”, followed by “T”, and repeat them faster and closer together (oh – I, oh – I, ohi). It should sound like “why”, without the “wh” movement of the lips and mouth.

Practice just your “trouble” letters by replacing them with sound alike letters. You do not need entire words or sentences, just the letters.

#### **Step Four: Replacing or Avoiding Trouble Sounds**

There are many sounds in words when letters are placed together that are very difficult to pronounce without moving your lips. Look in a mirror and say these words normally.

Bobby, Baseball, Family, Frank, Muffin, Marry, Paul, Peter, Volleyball, What, When, Yours

Now try to say them using the substitute letters and sounds from the previous step. The more animated the puppet is, the more people focus on what the puppet is saying.

#### **Step Five: Choosing a Voice for your puppet**

Possibly the most difficult part of ventriloquism is choosing and learning a voice for your puppet. The voice should be very different from your own, so you give the maximum “illusion” or appearance that the sound or voice is coming from your puppet and not you.

Voice Ideas:

Nasal sound (force the voice through the nose)

High falsetto

Old man or woman (raspy, grumpy)

Little kid voice

Watching cartoons or an animated movie is a great way to help you pick a voice or voices you are comfortable with. Practice the Ventriloquist Alphabet and easy sentences that you used in step 2 with your new voice. You can also practice by reading stories to your children. It will bring your bedtime stories to life and give your children some fantastic memories.

Hand puppets are inexpensive to buy or make. You can purchase Professional “Dummies.” Some have moveable mouths, eyes and even eyebrows. It is the Ventriloquist that makes the “Dummy” come to life. Happy Venting!

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