

ALL ABOUT MICROPHONES

A friendly aid

Microphones are simply a tool to help you speak to large groups of people. Used effectively, they make you look better, sound better and feel better.

Microphones make it easy to speak. They enable you to be heard without straining your voice, making your voice sound better and more natural.



Things to check first

Is the microphone omni-directional (picks up sound from all around) or uni-directional (picks up sound only from in front)? Uni-directional microphones are the most common type provided for speakers and singers. These require you to speak directly into them.

Does the microphone have a switch, usually a slide switch on the shaft? If so, use it to keep the microphone turned off except when you are speaking.

Is there a microphone stand? If so, adjust it so that the microphone is just below your mouth and pointing up to it at an angle.

A microphone can also be held in your hand and this is actually the best way to use it. However, you need to practice holding it so that you keep it correctly positioned.



Test the sound system before use, asking someone to help by listening to you.

- Is the volume setting right so that you can be heard comfortably throughout the room?
- Where is the best place for you to stand to use the microphone without feedback (a squealing noise) occurring?
- What is the optimum distance between the microphone and your mouth. This is normally between 10 and 20 cms. but varies with microphones.

If the sound system needs adjusting have it done, but ideally by the local expert.



Assess the microphones's **pop** resistance. This is the explosive puff of air we make when we say words starting with consonants like **p**, **f** and **b**.

Say “*Can I have feedback on whether there is a problem with my p’s exploding*”. If so, you will need to ensure the microphone is positioned or held so that you speak over it and not into it. Do this by pointing it at your mouth from below.

Tips on usage

Do not try to be a radio announcer. Speak in your normal voice at an even pace. Don't shout but speak slowly and clearly. Lower the tone of your voice if possible.

Try not to speak in a monotone manner. Rather try to inject **vitality** and **life** into your speech.

Do not look at the microphone. Look at your audience.

Do not move abruptly or move back and forth. Keep the microphone in a line between you and the audience as you turn to look from side to side. If you are holding the microphone, move the microphone as you move your head to maintain the straight line to your audience.

Avoid holding paper between your mouth and the microphone. Reading from notes is a communication barrier. If you do have some notes, keep them to one side and ensure that you keep the microphone in line between you and the notes when you look at them.

Never tap, blow into or thump a microphone. It is a delicate instrument and should be treated with care. So don't drop it!

If the microphone is on a stand, don't touch either the microphone or the stand.

If you need or prefer to hold the microphone in your hand, **don't** fiddle with the cord or rub the side of the microphone as this will generate noise.

Watch for extraneous noise generated by rustling paper or clinking jewellery.

If "acoustic feedback" occurs (a howling or squealing noise from the speakers), **move!** This happens because the microphone is too close to a speaker or the volume level is too high. If the feedback only occurs when you talk, you are probably talking too loudly.

At all times try to hear yourself speak. Moderate your tone from what you hear.

In summary

The microphone is your friend. Used with confidence and style, it helps to get your message across.

But remember,

- As with a computer, Garbage in Garbage out
- If you **mumble**, the microphone will.
- If you **um** or **ah**, yes it will too, but louder.
- If you whisper an aside, it will pick it up.
- If you mispronounce or do not **articulate**, then, you guessed it, the microphone will do the same, word for word!

However, if you speak clearly and distinctly the microphone will make your voice loud enough to be heard in comfort and exciting to listen to!