



The Irish Message Banking Toolkit



Overview of Message and Voice Banking

Message and voice banking are two different ways to record speech in order to preserve your unique voice for potential use on an electronic communication device in the future. While anyone can do this, people with medical conditions that may impact spoken communication should consider it.



Message banking involves:

- Generating a list of **personally meaningful** phrases, sentences and ways of saying things.
- Recording these in **your own voice** while your speech quality is clear enough to be easily understood.
- Removing and storing the recordings electronically as sound files.

If your speech clarity deteriorates in the future, your phrase recordings can be incorporated into an electronic communication device so that you can play them during a conversation.

Your voice is part of your identity, so using recordings of your own speech is more personal. People often choose to record terms of endearment, sarcastic or humorous comments, greetings, names of people/pets.



Voice banking involves:

- Recording a large inventory of your speech which can be processed by computer software to form a **digital representation** of your voice for use on an electronic communication device.
- Recording yourself reading aloud set lines of text to capture different speech sounds using an internet based service (e.g. *ModelTalker*, *CereVoice Me*, *Speak Unique* etc.).

Recording needs to be done while your speech clarity is very good. The process takes approximately 3-9 hours and needs to be completed in its entirety. It will not sound exactly like your own speech as it will be computerised.

Voice Repair is a more appropriate option if you have already noticed significant changes in how your speech sounds, but still want to carry out voice banking to create your own electronic voice. If you find that your speech is slurred, or you find it difficult to control your breathing for speech, voice repair allows you to use recordings of your speech to create a personalised voice that is clear and easy to understand.

This approach involves a commercial company taking samples of your speech and blending them with an available electronic voice, usually one that is matched to



your regional accent. Your Speech & Language Therapist can advise you as to whether this approach could be suitable for you.

Speech & Language Therapy (SLT) Services

An SLT can help by:

- Providing support and information about your speech.
- Discussing and supporting you with the process of message and/or voice banking.
- Providing you with information to help you to decide what is best for you.
- Helping you to plan the process.
- Providing you with access to the necessary equipment.
- Making onward referrals to other services that can offer additional help in the process.
- Storing your messages for future use, or by putting you in contact with a service that can do this.
- Helping you to explore communication technology options for future use.

Where to find an SLT to help with the process

There are three main locations for you to access support around message and/or voice banking:

- The SLT team in your local HSE Primary Community & Continuing Care team
- The SLT team at Beaumont Hospital (or other relevant specialist centre)
- The Central Remedial Clinic's (CRC) Assistive Technology team

Whichever service you are linked, with your permission, the SLT can make an onward referral to other services, if required.

Choosing your electronic communication device

- Your decision about making *message banking* and/or *voice banking* recordings will influence your choice of potential electronic communication device.
- Recorded messages and customised electronic voices cannot be used on every communication app or software. You should seek advice on compatible devices from your SLT and/or specialist assistive technology (AT) service.

Ultimately it is **your decision** whether to *message bank*, *voice bank* or do both. All options provide choices about how you manage your communication in the future.

If you decide these recording options are not for you, you will still be able to use built-in computerised voices on electronic communication devices. These voices may have a different accent to you though you will have some choice about which one to use.



What is right for me: message banking or voice banking?



You can do both *message* and *voice banking* but most people have a preference for one over the other. This section of the document poses some questions to help you to decide what is right for you.

When do I need to think about this?

- o Ideally, the sooner the better. If your voice is strong and clear, you are more likely to achieve good results from both *message* and *voice banking*.
- o If you start when you have noticed changes in your speech, the recording process can become more effortful over time.
- o The actual process of recording requires a time commitment, so you need to consider when is the *right time* for you, bearing in mind all the other demands on your time, as well as your current priorities.



Message Banking

What if my voice has started to change?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o You can record even if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ There has been significant change in your speech as long as it is easy to understand. ▫ Your speech is slurred, breathless or quiet though it may help to use speech strategies – your SLT can help you to practise these. o The most important consideration is that you are happy with how your speech sounds at the time when you make the recordings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Voice Banking</i> software requires a large sample of strong, clear and consistent speech to make a useful computerised version of your voice. o If your speech has changed a little bit you could record at times of the day when it tends to be strong. o <i>Voice banking</i> is not suitable if your speech is consistently very slurred, very quiet, or clear at the beginning but unclear by the end of a phrase but you could consider voice repair instead. |
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Voice Banking

Do I need to know a lot about technology?

Message Banking

You **need**:

- o A dictaphone-style voice recorder.

You do **not need**:

- o Any specific skills in using computers and/or tablets.
- o Access to a computer to record messages.

A computer is needed if you want to label and organise your messages, but you do not need to carry out this step yourself.

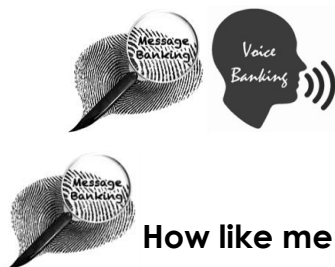
You **need**:

- o A reliable internet connection.
- o An email account.
- o Access to a computer to set up an account, to follow instructions about sound settings and make recordings.
- o A high quality headset microphone.

If you do not feel confident with this, a family member or friend who is familiar with using a computer could help you.

[At this stage, you do not need to have the electronic communication device that you would use your phrases on in the future if your speech deteriorates.]

Voice Banking



How like me will the final voice sound?

Message Banking

- When a recording is played on an electronic communication device, it will sound **exactly** as you sounded when you made the recording.

- When you make speech recordings for voice banking, they are processed by software to create a **computerised** version of **your voice**.
- It can help to listen to some samples available on the company websites.

Voice Banking

Will it take a lot of time?

Message Banking

- Just a few minutes If you record a small number of 10-20 key messages.
- A few hours If you record hundreds of messages.
- It can take time to make your list of messages to record. Your family, friends and SLT can help with this. Once your list is ready, you can record messages very quickly.

- Between 3-9 hours sitting at a computer, reading text from the screen.
- Recording is usually done over multiple sessions, typically of 30-60 minutes a day over a number of weeks.
- Recording time varies depending on the service you use.

Voice Banking

Will it allow me to say all that I want to say in the future?

Message Banking

- The aim is not to record everything you might ever want to say, just the phrases that would be most meaningful in **your own** speech.
- You will be able to say all you want to say using a combination of your recordings and the computerised speech engine* on an electronic communication device.

- Anything you type using an electronic communication device can be 'spoken out' using the computerised voice you created instead of the device's built-in computerised speech engine.

Voice Banking

* There are a range of commercially available computerised speech engines, and your SLT will help you to find one you like and which best suits your needs.

How much will it cost?

Message Banking

Usually nothing. The only thing you need is a dictaphone-style voice recorder. Usually your SLT or specialist assistive technology (AT) service will organise a loan of a recorder for you.

Voice banking is done using an online commercial service. Prices vary but at present all voice banking services involve a payment.

Voice Banking

For further information, please refer to:

The Message Banking Process

The Voice Banking Process