

Considerations and Steps for Starting with Voice Amplification

From our experience at Zytek we have compiled these points to be considered. Implementation of voice amplification often appears a simple solution to assist with communication. The breakdown in communication caused by difficulty hearing the speaker may cause frustration, impatience and upset for all involved. A voice amplifier is a relatively simple piece of technology but implementing it requires consideration of many human factors which can be less straight-forward. An individual who has a quiet or disordered voice due to a medical diagnosis may benefit from voice amplification but there are various considerations towards successful use of a personal aid. For an individual who wishes to prevent vocal strain due to raising the voice over prolonged periods or frequently, for example when speaking to a group, or over back-ground noise, a voice amplifier may be useful but the considerations may vary for this scenario. In this scenario it is important to understand the limitations of a personal aid, when compared to a Public Address system. The Zavox reo cannot substitute for a PA system. When using the Zavox Reo with a group, this should be a round table meeting, bed-side or small group, rather than a large class-room or auditorium, for example. Voice amplification is not for everyone. It is important to consider the day-to-day implementation, management and individual's interest in wearing a personal aid to assist communication.

1. Aims of use: who, how, what, where?

It is important to work out who requires this solution. In some cases, the family members, nursing home staff or other communication partners have decided that voice amplification is worth exploring. It is important to consider what is required in using a voice amplifier and how the device itself will be managed, whether the individual (speaker) is interested to try the solution and to discuss what is involved. If the individual does not see the need to amplify his or her voice, some preparation will be required before introducing an aid. It would be unusual for a speaker to wear the voice amplifier for the entire day. This is possible, but most people choose specific situations where they will require speech amplified.

2. Management. What is involved?

Before considering the Zavox Reo voice amplifier it will be important to consider the day-to-day practicalities of using this personal aid.

- a) The individual will need to wear the amplification box on their body using the carry pouch with waist strap or neck strap, or have it positioned on a table, piece of furniture or wheelchair tray for example. We have had some people wear the amplifier in a top shirt pocket.
- b) The device needs to be turned ON and OFF using the push-button controls. The Zavox does NOT need to be turned off in between periods of use. It is like a mobile phone in that when not in use as in making a phone call, the battery goes into standby mode. The length of standby mode is 60 hours.

- c) The most suitable microphone should be selected (usually during a trial phase) and worn with the microphone positioned 1 to 3 centimetres from the mouth. The user may be able to do this independently or assistance may be required. NOTE: the lapel microphone positioned on the lapel will not pick up low volume speech. It is too far away from the mouth. The microphone needs to be held close to the mouth when speaking. The headset microphone permit good positioning of the microphone with a comfortable and stable headband. We have found that some people do not like to wear something on the head, or others find the headset size unsuitable. The transdermal/throat microphone does not suit everyone. It also amplified swallows and other oral noises, and picks up clothes rustling.
- d) Once turned ON, the volume button needs to be pressed repeatedly until the correct volume is reached. We suggest positioning the microphone and amplifier, then turn the device ON, the speaker counts to 10 while the volume is adjusted correctly. The volume returns to ZERO every time the unit is switched off to prevent feedback.
- e) The device needs to be charged once the battery is low. Only the supplied charger should be used.

3. How to start with the Zavox Reo voice amplifier?

- a) Trial through a Speech Pathologist.

Zyteq offers a free 2 week trial through a Speech Pathologist. This means that voice conditions can be considered in the context of amplification as a solution. A Speech Pathologist will be able to advise whether amplification is the most appropriate intervention for the individual case. The Speech Pathologist can consider amplification as one strategy among others which may be used to assist with communication. Situations where amplification would be most useful can be identified and incorporated into aims for the trial. The Speech Pathologist can request a trial. We send out a unit from our loan pool with all our available microphone options to compare. The Speech Pathologist can assist with adjusting and setting-up the device, explaining and demonstrating management of the Zavox. The Zavox may be taken away from the clinic to be trialled in the communication situations which have been identified in the aims. The supervision of the trial lies with the Speech Pathologist as he or she may follow up a successful trial with an application for funding, if applicable.

- b) Independent trial

To trial the Zavox Reo without a Speech Pathologist we offer “sale or return” terms. This requires purchasing the Zavox with the microphones to trial and returning the items or the entire system if not required or unsuitable. Please read the full “sale or return” terms. If this is the option chosen, please be aware of all the considerations outlined above.

4. Purchase or funding

In some states of Australia individuals with a medical diagnosis may be eligible to receive a funded voice amplifier. This means the cost of purchase is covered up to a ceiling (maximum value or limit). This usually requires a Speech Pathologist referral, recommendation and application so please refer to point 3 – Trial through a Speech Pathologist.

For further information, trial request or support please contact Zyteq.