

For Ages
4-7

Voices Are Not for Yelling

Elizabeth Verdick
Illustrated by Marieka Heinlen



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free spirit
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To teachers everywhere,
who make such a big difference
in the lives of little ones.

—E.V.

To my family:
Patrick, Levi, and Nora.

—M.H.



What do you
use your
voice for?



Talking

“Hi!”



Asking questions

“How are you?”



Telling jokes

Laughing . . .
Ha, ha!

Tips and Activities for Caregivers and Parents

Using indoor voice versus outdoor voice is a skill all children need to learn, especially when they're in a group setting. Teaching it starts during the toddler years and may continue all the way through elementary school. Here are some ways to introduce, practice, and reinforce this skill.

Indoor/Outdoor Voice

Demonstrate aloud:

- "This is my outdoor voice!" (*loud*)
- "This is my indoor voice." (*normal tone*)
- "This is my quiet voice." (*lower, quieter*)
- "This is my whisper voice." (*whisper*)

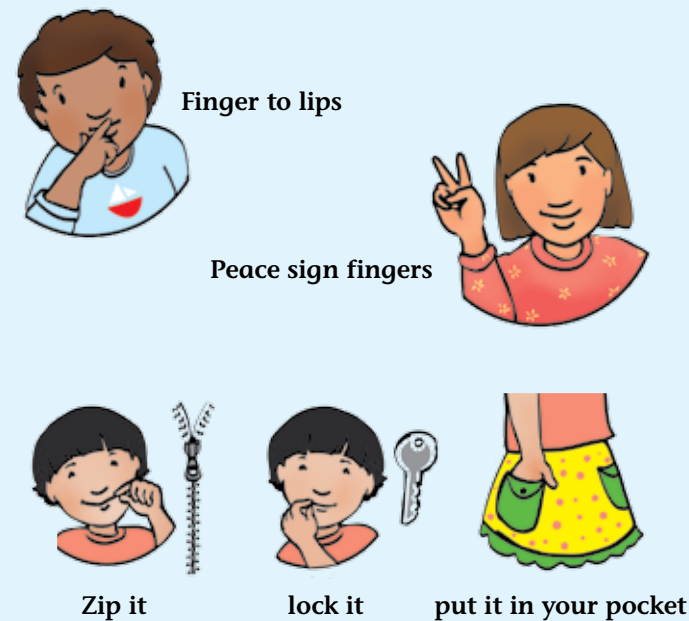
Ask the children to try along with you. Give them opportunities for frequent practice during different parts of the day.

Silly vs. Serious

Teach children the differences between "silly time" and "serious time." During silly time, let them be loud with their voices and bodies. Do this outside, if you wish. Show them how to act during serious time, when they need to use a quiet voice and a calm body.

Quiet-Time Gestures

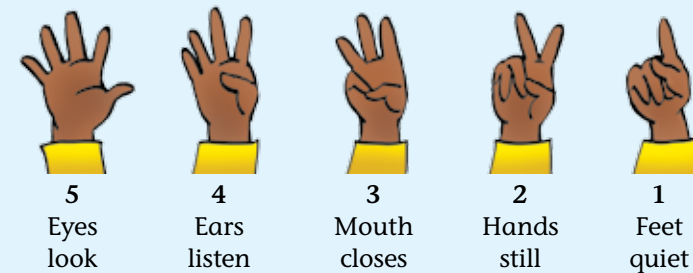
Young children can learn the signs that show it's quiet time. Demonstrate your favorites, and then use them consistently.



Hands up: Teacher raises hand; as soon as each child notices, he or she does the same until everyone has their hand in air.

Countdown from five

You can also teach children a corresponding action to each number:



Remember the importance of proximity. If the kids in your care get ramped up, move closer to them. Your presence is a signal that you're paying attention. Now they know you're watching, you hear them, and you're there to step in and help.

Sound Signals

As a caregiver, you probably have your own bag of tricks when it comes to helping children quiet down. Here are a few that are tried-and-true.

"Shhh": When you're shushing children, use a calm, quiet "Shhh" (avoid hissing it loudly).

Clapping: Try a sequence you can repeat, such as two loud claps followed by three rapid ones: *CLAP, CLAP, clap-clap-clap*. Continue until the children settle down.

Or, you might try this sequence:

- "Clap once if you can hear me."
- "Clap twice if you can hear me."
- "Clap three times if you can hear me."

By the time you've reached three claps, most of the children will have quieted down.

"Voices": Teach children that when you say "Voices," their response should be "Shhh." Repeat "Voices" until all the kids are saying "Shhh" and have their eyes on you.

Attention-getters: Purchase an item that makes a special sound that children learn to associate with quieting down. You might choose a bell, a rain stick, a shaker, castanets, or a chime. (Avoid whistles because they're too shrill and are a better option for signaling children outdoors.) Another useful trick is to flick the lights off and on.

"1-2-3, eyes on me": Teach this phrase and use it whenever you need to get the children's attention.

Freeze/Melt: Demonstrate how to freeze in place as soon as the word "Freeze" is said. Then say "Melt," the signal that the children can get back to their work or play.

Ever-quieter voice: A final option is to lower your own voice, getting quieter and quieter until the kids have to listen very closely to hear you. Now you have their attention!

Balanced Classroom

- If kids frequently get wild and revved up in your classroom or group setting, perhaps they need more outdoor time or gross-motor activities.
- Get the kids outside, no matter what the weather. Outdoor time is important for physical, emotional, and social development. Encourage parents to provide weather-appropriate clothing for all occasions (raingear, jackets, hats, and gloves).
- Play quiet classical music when children are restless.
- Have a rest time built into each day. After lunch or outdoor play, create a transitional period where the children can get comfortable on the floor and listen to a quiet story or soft music.
- During group activities when children all want to talk at once, encourage them to raise their hands and take turns. You may wish to use a "talking stick" or "speaking stone" that is passed to the next person whose turn it is.
- Each day, notice when children model appropriate behavior and then reward them with something special: additional free time, a sticker, or the chance to be the classroom helper or leader of the day.
- Sometimes children yell to express strong feelings, such as frustration and anger. You can help by identifying the emotions and showing that you understand. If the yelling persists, you might try: "I'm having trouble hearing you when you yell like that. Please quiet your voice so I can hear you better."
- Practice the "quiet your voice" skill from pages 26–27. You can help children with this skill during heated moments, but even better, teach them ahead of time so they know what to do when their emotions get stirred up. It's easier to call on and reinforce a technique they've already been introduced to.