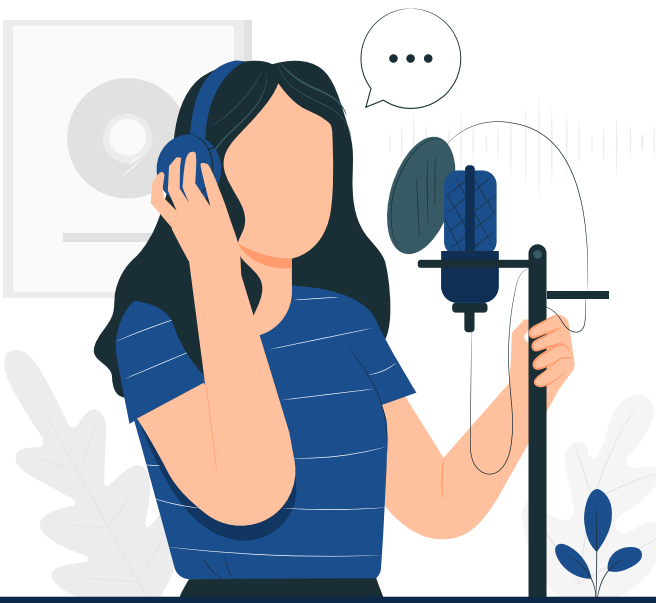




VO TALENT SELECTION AND DIRECTION CHEATSHEET

While the relationship between a director and their talent will always be personal and unique, knowing some commonly used words can make it easier to identify the right talent or to tell your talent exactly what you want.



TALENT'S APPROACH



UPBEAT AND ENERGETIC

Your project is colorful and fun and needs to make the viewer/listener happy and engaged. Tell your talent to smile big and get excited about it!



ANNOUNCER OR NOT ANNOUNCER

Typical higher energy read that is 'selling' a product. This can describe what you want or DON'T want.



SNARKY, DRY

Often used to direct the talent towards a comedic style that is clever and dry. The contrast of the talent's delivery and the wording of the script make this work.



APPROACHABLE, FUN, WHIMSICAL, PLAYFUL

These words help you to guide a talent towards a bubbly, fun or engaging type of read.



AUTHENTIC, REAL, RELATABLE

If you want your talent to deliver a read that sounds like an actual person would speak then real and authentic are the words to use. Feel free to modify these with emotions to shape the direction more specifically. See CONVERSATIONAL below.



SPONTANEOUS, AD-LIB/IMPROV

When you want to give the talent freedom to explore a bit and not stick exactly to the script then putting Ad-Lib or Improv in the direction will let them know they have that freedom. You might be pleasantly surprised with what you get...or you may hate it.



SERIOUS OR SOMBER

Some subjects or messages require a little extra care and respect. Make sure your talent understands that from the start.



PROFESSIONAL, CONFIDENT, AUTHORITATIVE

If you are presenting information as THE expert in your field and you want your viewer/listener to know it, these words will help you guide your talent's approach.



MODERN, SMART

Similar to professional, MODERN or SMART convey a level of confidence and knowledge (often around technology) that is delivered with a subtle knowing smile.



PASSIONATE

You want your talent to sound like your message is literally the most important thing in their life, so guide them to a level of personal and emotional buy-in that amplifies that feel.



HUMOROUS, COMEDIC TIMING

Comedy is a skill that requires good timing. Tell your talent to be intentional with their timing choices.



CLEAR AND ARTICULATE

When you want to make absolutely sure that every word in your script is fully heard and understood, CLEAR and ARTICULATE inform the talent that they shouldn't swallow words or parts of words.



EXPERIENCED

You're looking for a voice that sounds like they have been there and done that and learned the valuable lessons that make them the expert.



EDGY

This direction is often given when you are looking for a more aggressive approach and brisk pace to the read. Not angry...just edgy. A little smile changes this tone and can add a fun twist.



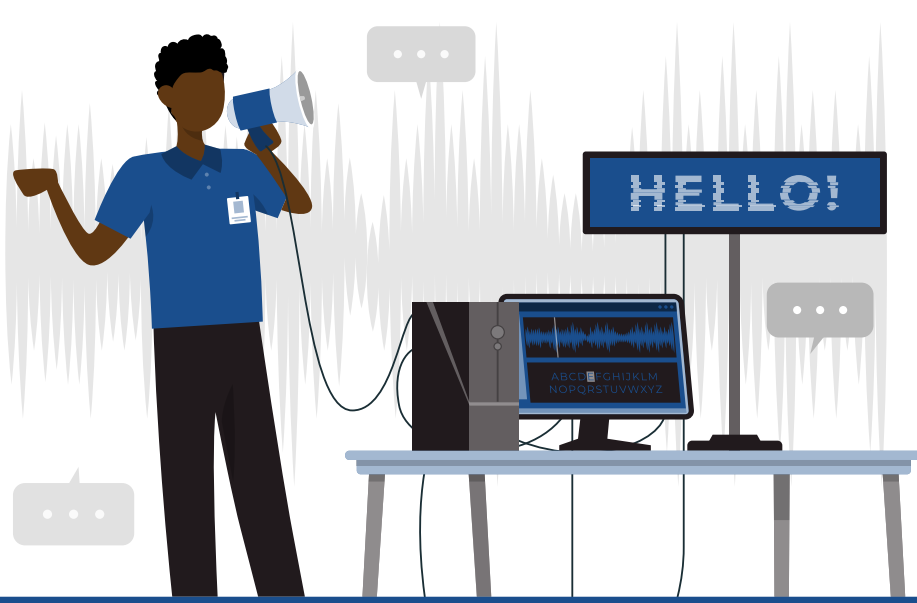
ATTITUDE, SWAGGER

Looking for a confidence that borders on arrogance (or maybe even crosses that line) and a voice that KNOWS they are the GOAT? Try these out.



HONEST, TRUSTWORTHY, PROUD

A quality to a read that you just can't help but trust. Usually real and authentic and often with warmth, a slight knowing smile and subtle nod.



VOCAL CHARACTERISTICS

GRAVITAS

A voice that carries weight (often deep and resonant but not always) and commands attention without high energy.



GRIT

This is a tough, working in the dirt kind of voice that is often mid-deep to deep and textured with a little attitude. Quite opposite of smooth and warm.



GRAVELLY

Usually a deeper voice and the textured sound of someone who smoked for years and loves a good whiskey. Pairs well with experienced.



WARM

A warm voice conveys empathy and compassion with a smooth character. Frequently a deeper, more experienced voice, but it doesn't have to be.



AGE, MATURE

The general age range and maturity level you are looking for is helpful in narrowing down voices. This is the age the voice **sounds** not necessarily the age of the talent.



RACE/ETHNICITY

Sometimes a project can work better with a specific race or ethnicity. It is not hateful or racist to identify the actual voice you are looking for.



UNIQUE OR IDENTIFIABLE

Some voices have a very 'vanilla' character to them, while others are extremely unique. Keep your goals in mind. If your project needs to stand out in a sea of choices, a unique voice can help make that happen. But sometimes it can be too distracting and draw attention to itself, rather than enhancing your message.



HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW (DEEP) REGISTER

It is helpful to narrow down your voice by register. This will prevent you from having to listen to a bunch of auditions from talent that you wouldn't likely use on a specific project.



SULTRY

Smooth, sometimes sexy and attractive, this direction is typically given to female talent but male talent can go there too if the project calls for it.



RICH, TEXTURED, LUXURIOUS

Typically deeper and more mature voices have a developed texture (or slight low end growl, not so smooth) that adds a bit of character and richness to a read. Think vinyl versus digital streaming.



SMOOTH

The opposite of gravelly, grit or textured. Smooth can be young or old but it is easy on the ears and often goes well with a warm trustworthy read.



BRIGHT

This is frequently a younger, more peppy, higher register voice. Use BRIGHT for a more upbeat, bubbly or energetic type of read.



ACCENT

If you have a specific accent in mind, call it out. This will narrow down the talent you have to choose from. It's usually best to stick with an authentic accent unless the project won't be heard by those who HAVE that authentic accent.



ROLE (WIFE, SON, HUSBAND, BLUE COLLAR, ETC...)

Is the role you are casting really specific? Knowing the talent is playing a wife or a blue collar worker or any other role in life will help them to get into the right character and the right mindset.



SPEED (SLOW, AVERAGE, QUICK)

Identifying the general speed that you want things spoken is super helpful. An average speed is somewhere around 150 words per minute. Feel free to use descriptive words like 'a walking pace' or 'a good clip.'



WAIT...WHERE'S CONVERSATIONAL?!

So, let's address "Conversational."

Conversational is probably one of the most overused words for giving direction and it has become less and less helpful over the years. When one person says conversational maybe it means you should not sound like an announcer. Or maybe it means realistic and authentic with ad-libs. Or maybe it means dry and dull and plain. There are a LOT of ways to interpret 'conversational.'

RARELY does it mean mimicking a real conversation, which can be pretty uninteresting. The C-word just isn't very descriptive alone and it will almost always need further explanation. Start with an accurate description and avoid using JUST the word conversational.

Talent everywhere will thank you.

BONUS HELPFUL TOOLS



MUSIC TO BE USED

Extremely helpful for a talent to be able to FEEL the overall vibe (Be intentional with this though, as it can limit the talent's creativity for better or for worse)



AUDIO OR VIDEO SAMPLES

Great to share if you are shooting for a specific style and need to inform the talent's creative choices



SPECIFIC VOICE MATCH

Why leave it up to interpretation when you can tell the talent exactly what you want (beware of inexperienced talent attempting to do an impersonation rather than adopting certain qualities)



SPECIFIC CHARACTER VOICE

Similar to voice match, but think cartoon character rather than characteristics. Doesn't have to be childlike



KNOWN STYLE MATCH (PROMO, CORPORATE, EXPLAINER, SPORTS COMMENTATOR, ETC)

There are a bunch of styles that everyone knows when they hear them. No need to re-describe an HGTV Promo read when that is exactly what you want



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Jason Huggins - VO Pro - The REAL Cool Guy



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