

Message and Voice Banking

Changes in or loss of speech may occur with ALS. While there is no easy way to prepare for this prospect, **Message Banking** and **Voice Banking** are excellent options for preserving your unique sound and the identity it represents. Voice or Message Banking will enable you to later customize a **Speech Generating Device (SGD)** with your voice which can create a more personal communication experience for you and those you love.

Message and Voice Banking are free and can be done in your home, using your computer, tablet, smart phone or a voice recorder. Banking earlier in your diagnosis is preferable so if you run into any challenges or just find you are putting it off, be certain to make an appointment with a speech therapist to assist you.

Message Banking

The simpler and quicker method is called Message Banking and involves recording common expressions in your own voice. This method unlike Voice Banking captures your special cadence and delivery. You can record greetings, laughter, your quintessential sayings, words of affection, a blessing, an expletive, pet praise or commands, etc. Everyone diagnosed with ALS should Message Bank as the time commitment is small and the result can be invaluable.

Recordings can be easily made using **Message Banking**, a free app available at the Windows Store. This app provides message suggestions, push button recording, and a single press to download all of your labeled, MP3 recordings into a folder on your computer. The MP3 format works on all speech generating devices or text-to-speech (TTS) apps that play audio files. **AlphaCore** is a TTS app specifically designed to quickly import *Message Banking* recordings and automatically set message buttons to play these recordings. This eliminates the need to create labeled buttons on phrase pages for each of your recorded messages and then upload each audio file to a message button.

In a quiet environment some built-in mics (like that in the Surface Tablet) may be adequate for making good recordings. Listen to the recordings and decide. A quality hands-free, USB mic like the **Sennheiser PC 36** can be used if required.

An alternative to using the *Message Banking* app, is to record using an iPhone or iPad with a high quality voice recorder app (e.g. **"Voice Recorder HD"** app for \$1.99) or a handheld digital recorder (e.g. Zoom H1). Messages should be recorded in either Wav or MP3 formats. Also if not using the *Message Banking* app, which provides suggested messages, be sure to record brief, single message recordings.

Of course, you will not be able to record every possible thing you might want to say but you can use this method to record many meaningful phrases. Anything not recorded can still be expressed using one of many synthesized voices provided by your SGD or text-to-speech app.

Voice Banking

The second method, Voice Banking, requires the download of a free program called **ModelTalker**. This program extracts the sounds of your voice from an extensive speech sample that you are prompted to provide. A hands-free USB mic is required (see above recommendation). The program uses your speech samples to create a customized synthesized voice. This voice can then be imported into an SGD and some text-to-speech apps for tablets. With your personal voice installed, a speech generating device will speak any message you enter using a voice that resembles your own.

Voice Banking requires a significant time commitment as you will be prompted to repeat 1600 sentences in order to provide ModelTalker with a large enough sample of your speech to accurately duplicate your voice. This can take up to 16 hours and is best done over many 7 to 30-minute sessions when your voice is fresh and your energy level is high. Go to ModelTalker.com for downloads, tutorials and more information.