

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. Message or voice banking enables 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 can be done at 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 that you are putting it off, be certain to make an appointment with your speech therapist to assist you.

Message Banking

Message banking involves recording common or meaningful 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.

Your messages can be recorded in a variety of ways. A free Windows 10 app called **Message Banking** is available at the Windows Store. This app provides message suggestions, push button recording and a single step to download all of your labeled .wav recordings into a folder on your computer. .Wav formatted audio files will play on all speech generating devices or text-to-speech (TTS) apps that play audio files.

An alternative to using the *Message Banking* app is to record using an iPhone or iPad with a voice recorder app (e.g. “**Voice Recorder HD**” app for \$2.99) or a handheld digital recorder (e.g. Zoom H1). Messages should be recorded in high quality .wav or format. Also, if you are not using the *Message Banking* app, which provides suggested messages, be sure to record short, single message recordings. General messages are often more useful. (e.g. “I love you!” Vs. “Kim, I love you!”).

In a quiet environment, some built-in mics (like those in Surface Tablets or iOS devices) may be adequate for making good recordings. Listen to your recordings and decide. To improve recording quality use a hands-free, USB mic like the Sennheiser PC 36 or Jabra UC 550 with computers or the Zoom iQ7 stereo microphone with iPads or iPhones.

Of course, you will not be able to record every possible thing you may want say. Anything not recorded can still be expressed using one of many synthesized voices provided by speech generating devices or text-to-speech apps on a tablet.

Voice Banking

Voice banking creates a synthesized duplicate of your own voice that can later be imported into a speech generating device and some text-to-speech apps. These devices will then speak any message you enter using your personalized synthesized voice. Currently the most popular voice banking program is **ModelTalker**. This program extracts the sounds of your voice from an extensive speech sample that you are prompted to provide by repeating 1600 sentences. This can take up to 16 hours and is best done over many 5 to 30-minute sessions, when your voice is fresh and your energy level is high. A hands-free USB mic is required (see above recommendation). Upon completion of the process, ModelTalker sends you a sample of the created voice. You can purchase the full voice file to install on a speech generating device for \$100.

Go to ModelTalker.org for downloads, tutorials and more information.

Other voice banking programs include:	Acapela	acapela-group.com/voices/voice-replacement
	CereVoice	cereproc.com/en/products/cerevoiceme
	VocalID	vocalid.com

Your speech therapist or SGD tech support team will assist you with transferring messages or a voice to your speech device.