1-Combating Nerves:

One of the best tools to keep you calm is to be prepared. Concern about something down the line will get in the way of the entire program. Make sure you have everything you need, and practice it! Having a friend to practice in front of will be much more effective than an empty room, but anything will help.

Often, anxiety tightens us up, which will certainly affect your voice. Proper breathing is the best way to calm yourself down quickly.

**Counts:** Count as you breathe in and out, starting with the number 2. Match your breath to the counts as you increase the numbers.

**Colors:** Imagine soothing colors flowing into your body as you inhale. Greens and silvers tend to be particularly effective, but use what suits you best. Let the colors fill your entire body.

Loosening up the body will leave you feeling more relaxed. Just before the program it’s a good idea to remind your body that you have nothing to worry about.

**Grounded Shake:** With your legs a little wider than shoulder width apart, drop into a shallow squat, and let all your muscles hang loosely, including the face. Gently bounce with your knees, and let everything flop about. It’s nice to do a bit of vocalization with this as well. *(If you sound like Frankenstein’s monster, good job!)*

**Stretch:** Gently stretch your muscles, yoga-like. Let it slow you down, and try to keep that peaceful calm as you go into the program.

**Other tips:**

If you aren’t typically a coffee drinker, you’ll want to avoid it before a program. You’ll likely get jittery, and your mind will have trouble staying on the part of the program you’re presenting.

Starting a program with the same song or rhyme might not help immediately, but over time it will let your mind fall into a comfortable pattern before moving on to less familiar things. If you’ve got a strong start, and a strong finish, audiences are much more forgiving of any hiccups in the middle!
During the Program:

Even if you’ve done all you can beforehand, nervousness might slip in during your program. It would be a bit odd if you decided to stop for silent breathing, or start a grounded shake (unless you got all the kids to join you!). Here are some subtle things you can do in front of a group.

**Breath:** One of the most immediate tools for a calming effect is proper breath. Let it flow through your nostrils into your diaphragm.

Take a little time while you’re pulling out the next book, or between paragraphs in a chapter book, to get some deep breathes, and maybe imagine the soothing colors with them.

**Tense:** If you start experiencing undesired shaking, it might help to briefly tense the muscles and then relax them. It’s nice if you can link this with breath, inhale while you tighten, and exhale while you relax.

**2-Voice:**

Power- If you want to get your voice to carry, or have variety, you’ve got to get your voice used to being used that way. Breath is really the key to power, so breathe into your diaphragm. *(Something to hold in mind, often we only think about the audience directly in front of us, and we undershoot our volume. Imagine that the story needs to be heard from someone on the other side of the back wall. Then you’re more likely to have everyone in the room hear you.)*

**Face scrunches:** Allowing the air to be properly supported is the most important thing, but you also want to be able to let the air out. Get those face muscles used to moving.

**Invisible Gum:** Gently work your mandible, as if you are chewing gum. Try different amounts, for larger stretches!

**Masque vs vocal chords:**
Since we’re relying on breath, don’t overwork your vocal chords. Using the following sounds, hold out the ‘m’, and feel it buzzing in your mask (the bone structure of your cheekbones and nose).

*am, I’m, ohm, ahm, ihm*

**Hey!**: Sometimes shouting is the solution! Using your ab power, throw that sound. Once you’ve got the punch, sustain the sound as you drop the pitch. Keep it strong to the end!
Enunciation- Making noise isn’t much help if you can’t be understood. If the room is quiet enough, proper enunciation of words is much more effective than just speaking loudly. The consonants are our friends!

**Lip Buzz:** Going up or down the musical scale, or using a favorite tune, buzz your lips together. They do all the work when making consonants, so we want to make sure they’re warmed up!

**Consonant Parade:** Go through the alphabet, hitting each consonant sharply twice. Then, keeping it sharp, spit it out like a machine gun before moving to the next letter.

**Tongue Twisters:** A classic tool for getting your mouth familiar with forming proper sounds.

3-Variation:

The voice can only produce sounds consistently and predictably if it has practiced them, so it makes sense to give it a workout if you want more variety in your presentations.

**Falls/rise:** With something like a yawning sensation *(yawning is great to relax the vocal chords, by the way)*, take your voice as high as you can, and let it gently fall down to the depths of your range. Then fling it back up.

**Pitch and placement:** Think of the voice as a small apartment building. The lobby is a nice place to hang out, but is it the only room you’re using? Ride the elevator up to the penthouse, or down to the basement. Also, go forward and backward on each level.

**Cartoons:** Cartoon characters often have great variety in their voice, so use them for inspiration! Try to match the vocal qualities, even if you don’t get it just right, you’ll have something more unique than your normal voice. Do the same thing with animals. Make the sound of an animal, or consider their physical attributes, and then try speaking that way. Then mix up the characters! Maybe an elephant will have the voice of a shrew.

When playing with voice, consider **Speed** (fast to slow), **Pitch** (high to low), **Placement** (nose, mouth or throat), **Breath** (forceful or airy), and maybe even a Dialect!

Also, consider the context of your text! You’ll want to read a line differently if the character is *tittering*, than if they are *gruffly replying*. This relates back to proper preparation.
**Tongue Twisters:** The important thing when practicing tongue twisters is to form the sound correctly. While it’s fun to go fast, work up to it and make sure you’re properly creating the sounds first. Get that mouth moving!

When tweedle beetles battle with paddles in a puddle they call it a tweedle beetle puddle paddle battle.

To being to toboggan, first buy a toboggan, but don’t buy too big a toboggan.

Can you can a can as a canner can can a can?

The lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue, the tip of the tongue, the teeth, the lips.

Ken Dodd’s dad’s dog’s dead.

Greek grapes are good in the grip of a Greek grape gatherer.

Lonely lowland llamas are ladylike.

Imagine an imaginary menagerie manager imagining managing an imaginary menagerie.


Any noise annoys an oyster, but an annoying noise annoys an oyster most.

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked.

I am not the pheasant plucker, I’m the pheasant plucker’s mate.

I am only plucking pheasant’s because the pheasant plucker’s late.

Red leather, yellow leather, good blood, bad blood.

Roberta ran rings around the Roman ruins.

Sally sells seashells by the seashore. The shells Sally sells are from the sea I’m sure.

The sixth sheikh’s sixth sheep’s sick.

A tutor who tooted a flute tried to tutor two tooters to toot,

Said the two to their tutor, “Is it harder to toot or to tutor two tooters to toot?”

Theophilous Thistle, the thistle sifter, thrust a thousand thistles through the thick of his thumb.

A loyal warrior will rarely worry why we rule.