

Voice/Message Banking

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q: What is voice banking?

A: Voice banking is a way for individuals living with ALS to create a synthesized version of their natural speaking voice. The benefit to voice banking is that individuals can use their personal synthesized voice with their speech generating device. When individuals are communicating with others, the “voice” coming out of the speakers sounds similar to their natural speaking voice. In essence, should an individual living with ALS lose the ability to verbally speak, they will have a digital version of their natural speaking voice installed on their speech generating device, enabling them to communicate with others while maintaining a unique feature of themselves, their voice!

- *There are currently two voice banking platforms: Acapela and Model Talker.*

Q: Who is eligible for Team Gleason funding for voice banking?

A: Anyone living in the USA that has been officially diagnosed with ALS.

Q: Team Gleason already paid for me to complete voice banking with one system. Can I still apply for funding assistance with the other system?

A: Yes, you can still apply for funding assistance with both systems.

Q: Do I need an external USB microphone to voice bank?

A: Yes. Team Gleason or the ALS Association MN/ND/SD Chapter will be happy to provide you with a USB microphone for voice banking at no cost. Please contact Valerie@alsmn.org to get started.

Q: Do I need a laptop or computer to complete voice banking?

A: Yes, a tablet will not suffice. If you do not have access to a laptop or computer, please contact valerie@alsmn.org and she may be able to connect you to an affiliated university for support.

Q: What devices can I use with my personalized synthetic voice?

A: Most speech generating devices can download your voice files. Ask your speech therapist for assistance. Additionally any tablet or smart phone that supports the application software “Predictable” will allow you to download your voice as well. Contact Valerie@alsmn.org to receive info on downloading the Predictable app at no cost to you.

MY OWN VOICE-ACAPELA

Q: How many phrases do I need to record for Acapela to be able to create my own voice?

A: A minimum of 50 phrases needs to be recorded so that Acapela can create your synthetic voice. This will take around 30-90 minutes to complete.

Q: How do I get started voice banking with Acapela?

A: Go to: <https://teangleason.org/need-assistance/>

- Fill out the application. For the field “purpose of usage”, select “medical”.
- Upon clicking Medical, some additional fields will appear. Complete these fields.
- For the field “request for funding”, select “Team Gleason”
 - Team Gleason will be notified of your request. Team Gleason will be contacting all clients before approving the request by email and/or phone. Note: If you do not respond to Team Gleason’s request for contact within 14 days, your request for funding will be denied and you will need to reapply.
 - Once the request is approved, you will receive an email with your login credentials. Log in to your account, click the “Record” tab, and download the Acapela software to get started.

MODEL TALKER

Q: How do I get started voice banking with ModelTalker? A: To get started, go to <https://www.modeltalker.org/>.

- Go to “Support Organizations” under the “Registration” tab and scroll down to apply for support from Team Gleason
- Fill out the application, and a member of our team will reach out to you to explain the next steps.

Q: How many phrases do I need to record? A: Model Talker recommends 400 phrases as the minimum, suggests at least 800, and allows for 1600 phrases. Recording 1600 phrases takes approximately 6 hours to complete.

● ***Please note: Voice banking is most successful when your speech is clear and easily understood. Check with a speech language pathologist to make sure you are a good candidate before enrolling in a voice banking program. It is important to understand that the process of voice banking may take at least a few hours of your time and energy.***

● ***One more recommendation to consider is to make use of a voice memos app in addition to voice banking. Many modern smartphones/tablets have a voice memos app built in, otherwise, there are typically many free voice memo apps to choose from that allow you to record messages in your own voice. Acapela does not currently offer recording of custom phrases, so this is beneficial if you’d like to be sure to record personal and individualized messages. If you need help finding a voice memos app to download, please contact Valerie@alsmn.org.***