



The Irish Message Banking Toolkit



The Message Banking Process

Each person's communication style is unique. Your speaking voice, accent and turn of phrase are components of 'you' and your personality. *Message banking* is a process that allows you to capture your individual style of communication that you have developed over time through your personal life experience. It involves making recordings of your natural speech as it sounds now. If a medical condition causes your speech clarity to deteriorate in the future, *message banking* provides you with the option to use your recorded phrases on an electronic communication device. You may or may not need to use these messages in the future but it can provide some reassurance to know that they are there should you need them.

Electronic communication devices

Electronic communication devices provide a different way to participate in conversation if your speech is not easy to understand. Typically, the device uses an electronically generated voice known as *computerised speech*. With *message banking* it is possible to use the recordings of your natural speech alongside computerised speech. Playing your recorded phrases can add additional meaning to what you are saying compared to using computerised speech on its own. It is a way to continue to communicate part of your personality if your speech is affected by your medical condition.

Deciding whether or not to message bank

If you have a medical condition that can cause speech to deteriorate, it is important to be aware that *message banking* is possible should you wish to do it but not everyone chooses to record their speech. Following your diagnosis, you may need time to accept and reflect on the diagnosis itself and/or you may have other priorities that you need to focus on. Family and friends can support you with the process but ultimately it is important that you feel it is right for you.

Possible reasons to decide for or against message banking are outlined below.

Reasons to message bank include ...

- o Being able to communicate a part of 'you'
- o When played it will be natural speech, not computerised speech
- o Peace of mind knowing you have a plan in place if your speech deteriorates
- o Feeling positive about taking on a proactive project that you could find enjoyable/interesting

Reasons not to message bank include ...

- o Difficulty in adjusting to your medical diagnosis
- o Feeling that how your speech sounds now does not represent 'you'
- o Your speech is very difficult to understand so a recording would not be clear
- o Feeling overwhelmed by the technical component of the process
- o Preference to use non-electronic ways to communicate (e.g. writing) if needed
- o Deciding to manage symptoms that are present rather than focusing on ones that might appear in the future



What is involved in message banking?

Step 1: Generating messages

First, you need to make a list of your conversational phrases. It is not necessary to think of everything you might want to say in the future. The idea is to consider phrases that are **personally meaningful** to you and your circle of family and friends.

- There is no set number of phrases to record.
- You can record just a handful of very personal messages or you can record more to cover a variety of different scenarios.

If you have a very large number of phrases, it can be harder to remember what phrases you have and to find the one you want to use when you want to use it. The messages people often choose to record and use on a electronic communication device include:

- Greetings/introductions
- Expressions of love or appreciation
- Phrases/jokes/humorous comments they say a lot
- Phrases for pets
- Phrases to steer or guide a conversation
- Phrases to express how they are feeling

For further information see

Generating Messages for Message Banking 

Step 2: Recording messages

You need to make sound recordings of yourself speaking your phrases. It is best to consider recording phrases as early as possible after your diagnosis when your speech is closest to how it usually sounds. This is especially important if deterioration in your speech clarity was one of the first issues that led you to consult your doctor.

If your speech sounds slurred and/or it is breathless or very quiet, consider recording your phrases in short sessions over several days. Chose a time of the day when it tends to be clearest. It may be helpful:

- To make sample recordings and then listen back to them to help you to decide whether or not you are happy with your speech clarity.
- To talk with your Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) about strategies to help to maximise your speech clarity.



Recordings made on smartphone or tablet apps may not be compatible with some electronic communication devices so it is best to make recordings on a dictaphone-style voice recorder.

For further information see

Recording Messages for Message Banking 



It can help to approach *message banking* as a project. Discuss how much time you want to spend on it with your SLT and she/he will help you to plan. The process of making lists of messages and recording them as outlined in Steps 1 and 2 can be done just once or repeated as many times as you want if new phrases occur to you.

Step 3: Organising & storing messages

When you have finished making your recordings, they should be:

- Removed from the voice recorder and transferred to a computer so they can be reviewed, labelled and grouped.
- Stored electronically in a safe place where they can be accessed easily in the future if you need them.

Step 4: Incorporating recordings into a communication device

- If your speech clarity deteriorates in the future, contact your SLT who will help you to explore different communication options.
- If you select an electronic communication device, your SLT and/or assistive technology (AT) professional can incorporate your recordings into the device for you.