

VOICE AMPLIFIERS FOR TOUR GUIDES

Tour guides make great effort to prepare for their walks, researching, promoting, practicing - but it can all be lost on the walkers if they can't hear you. That is the single most common bit of feedback we hear from walkers – they can't hear the tour guides. With a little bit of preparation, begging and borrowing, this problem can be averted. Here's some helpful tips on how to be heard on your Jane's Walk.

OPTION #1: BUY IT

If you want to buy something basic for this purpose, we've had success with a small mic/amplifier unit that costs around \$60 USD. It's called the Sky Model WAP-5D – according to New York City tour guides, it's the 'industry standard' (pictured above). It gets strapped around your waist or hangs over the shoulder. Even better, you can have a volunteer hold it up high so the sound projects further! We have found the most reliable source for these bad boys is in Florida – and they deliver them promptly to us Canadians. The waist-band amplifier runs on batteries and the unit doubles as a battery charger if you buy rechargeable batteries. You can find one online here:

http://www.powermegaphones.com/s_productinformation.asp?categoryID=0&productID=201

To order the WAP-5D, you need to contact Audio Sounds Electronics, Inc. at (305) 594-0559 or email them at sales@audiosoundselectronics.com

The cost for the WAP-5D is \$40.38 USD, and shipping is another \$16.20 USD. Shipping is UPS Ground – they can get the systems to you in about 3-5 days. Overnight shipping is quite expensive, so we don't recommend it.

OPTION #3: IMPROVISE

As a last resort, if you cannot get access to a microphone or amplifier, the most important thing is to throw inhibition to the wind. DO NOT BE SHY. You are the guide and host, they want to hear you and you must project. If Broadway actors can make themselves heard to 600 people, you can make yourself heard to 20.

Remember, do not talk into traffic, talk into a wall and the walkers themselves who have been tightly corralled in by your or your volunteers, preferably off the main street where there's too much ambient noise to talk over. You can get people to stand on stairs or a slope and speak to them 'amphitheatre' style. You could also climb on top of something a bit higher, and project over the group. You've really got to belt it out, especially if you're on busy streets.

Another low-tech amplification device you can make yourself is a bullhorn: roll a piece of thick paper or cardboard into a cone shape and yell through that. Maybe some of you have a past in cheerleading and will be familiar with this technique – go team!



Akilah and Stephanie show us how it's done with the waist-band amplifier. Separating the microphone from the speaker helps reduce feedback

OPTION #2: RENT OR BORROW IT

Halleluia! You can also rent megaphones from Long & McQuade Music Stores for \$5 a day. There are Long & McQuade stores across Canada, with the exception of Quebec. You can locate a Long & McQuade near you by going to their website: <http://www.long-mcquade.com/?page=locations>

You can also buy a megaphone for about \$100. In the past we have found them at electronics stores like Future Shop, Best Buy and The Source.

And of course, many of you have connections to community organizations that OWN a megaphone – borrow it. This is generally the best option of all, and builds community connection!