

# What Does YOUR Mouth Do When it's Doing Nothing?

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The Swallowing Series for Therapists, Parents and Clients  
Char Boshart, M.A., CCC-SLP

Everyone's mouth rests between functions, and whether you know it or not, everyone has a "mouth resting posture." This specific posture is where your lips, tongue, and jaw position themselves when not eating, drinking, or talking. The lips, tongue, and jaw automatically go to their resting locations and maintain those positions intermittently throughout the day and night.

Most importantly, your mouth resting posture plays an important role in your swallowing and speaking. Here's the biggest reason: Wherever your lips, tongue, and jaw rest, is where they work. In other words, if your tongue rests low, more than likely your speech sounds will be produced "low" in your mouth as well. During the production of more speech sounds, ideally the tongue interacts up within the top dental arch (up within the area of the roof of your mouth).

Everyone's mouth resting posture is not the same, but there are desirable positions and some positions are more beneficial than others. The undesirable positions can actually alter your appearance and the way you swallow and speak. This is definitely not helpful.

Basically, the good resting positions that you want to adopt are: Closed Lips, a Tongue that rests up, and a Jaw that is gently relaxed. Here are additional details:

- **Your Lips are Completely and Comfortably Closed:** The lip muscles must exert enough energy to close the lips and keep them closed; this requires lip muscle endurance.
- **Your Tongue Partially Touches the Top:** The front-tongue and mid-tongue elevate within the upper arch. The front-tongue rests on the bumpy part behind your front teeth (the alveolar ridge) and part of the front of your hard palate. The tongue is not "curled" (like an /l/) but is in more of a "humped" shape. The tongue-sides touch the insides of the top, back teeth.
- **Your Jaw is Gently Parted:** It's lowered slightly, and the space between the top and bottom teeth should measure between 1 to 3 mms.

This is the central position and the one you'll aim for in your myofunctional therapy. If you compare your own mouth resting posture with the above description, it may be the same, or similar, or completely different. It's normal to discover minor deviations, usually pertaining to the position of the tongue. It may be more forward or more back. Regarding lips, however, closed lips are always best as is a gently lowered jaw. It's never appropriate to clench teeth during the rest position.