

Warm Ups to Build Skills and Smiles

Have You ever had a chorus member ask you why we do vocal warmups?

A. Why do vocal warm-ups?

- a. Keep voice healthy
- b. Sound your best
- c. Protect against damage.
- d. Allow you to sing better
- e. Extend your range comfortably.

B. When should you warm-up?

Ideally, you should warm up every day. And if you're not already, you should start slow. Do some simple exercises for 20 minutes every morning. Don't try to belt out that high C just yet — you'll need to work yourself up to that.

Remember, warmups help grow and unlock the skills that you already have.

C. What's the difference between a warm-up and a vocal exercise?

Those terms are used interchangeably! The only real difference would be in their **function**: if it's an exercise used to "wake up" and get your voice moving, we'd call it a warm-up. More challenging patterns that work on belting, large leaps, or fast passages, we'd call vocal exercises.

D. What's the BEST warm-up?

Each singer and voice teacher probably have a different favorite. My personal all-around favorite is the lip trill (lip roll/lip bubble) because it's great for activating the correct muscles for breath support, relaxing the face, finding balanced resonance, navigating over vocal breaks, and helping the vocal folds keep vibrating together as they stretch.

E. Does it matter which order I go in?

Yes! Always start with something gentle to stretch out the cords and get your voice moving. Save more challenging exercises for later in your warm-up!

For each and every exercise in your warm-up, always prioritize **good posture, low relaxed breathing, and freedom (feeling good while you sing)**. If that's happening, you're on the right track! But if you come out of alignment, forget to breathe well, or start to feel pain and strain, stop!

This is a sample routine you can modify, depending on your goals and time frame on any given day!

1. Breathing:

- a. Breathe deeply, relaxing your belly so the belly, ribs, and back expand with your breath.
- b. Stretch out your neck, jaw, face, sides, etc.
- c. Activate your breath support muscles with a hiss exercise.

2. Begin **vocalizing** on something **easy** to start stretching out the cords:

lip roll, HM (hum), or NN. **Bubble/Trill/NG/"F"/Straw Phonation/Kazoos/Water Cups**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQ3TJDE17Kg>
Sing Geek explanation
- **Sirens, easy phonation slides and exercises**
- **Any challenging passage of music to help smooth.**

3. Sing on an easy, relaxed **OO vowel** to work on good, consistent resonance throughout your range.

- **easy up/down 1,2,3,4,5,4,3,2,1 on any vowel**

4. Open up to an AH, YAH, UH, or YUH to relax the jaw down and lift the soft palate up.

- **Yah - 1,2,3,2,1**

5. Train healthy **cord compression**: use syllables that begin with a G or B and/or work on achieving a **balanced onset** (starting the sound with a vowel, careful to not begin with excess air or a glottal attack).

- **Guh Guh 1,3,2,4,3,5,4,2,1**

6. Get into **mix voice** with an NG, NYAH, NAY, MUM, or BUH.

- **NYAH - down 5,4,3,2,1**

7. Work on agility with exercises that cover a wide range, focusing on pitch accuracy and vowel modification (as needed).

- **Word sentence - "I Am All Right" (5, 8,5,3,1)**
- **"Lah, beh, dah, meh, nee, poh, too, lah, beh**
- **16 vowel exercise**
- **Bouncing ahs**
- **Zooma pg 69 (Sing Baby Sing)**
- **Pg. 75 (Sing Baby Sing)**

8. Exercise your **belt/high chest** voice with a NO or HEY exercise, being sure to keep the throat and face relaxed, supporting with the low body.

- **Ha - staccato 1 3 5 3 1**

9. Harmony/Sync

- **4pt - Me, Meh, Mah, Moh, Moo - replace with various sayings.**

10. Tongue Twisters/Rounds/Quodlibets

- **Somewhere Over the Rainbow**
- **My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean**
- **Rose/America**

Warm down: If you spent quite a bit of time working out, warm down with a gentle hum or lip trill.

Last thought!

If you have very limited time, just visit the basics: stretch and breathe, warm up on a lip trill or easy syllable, and sing something that makes you happy!

Resources

Sing Geek - you tube

Sing Baby Sing

<https://www.yourvoicestudio.co.uk/why-do-i-need-to-warm-up-before-i-sing/#:~:text=Sing%20with%20a%20%E2%80%9Ccold%E2%80%9D%20voice,rid%20of%20than%20you%20think.>

<https://flypaper.soundfly.com/play/importance-vocal-warmups/>

<https://www.voices.com/blog/vocal-warm-ups-building-a-warm-up-routine/#:~:text=Stretch%20out%20your%20neck%2C%20jaw,consistent%20resonance%20throughout%20your%20range.>

Resource options

Katheen Hansen - You tube

Nikki Blackmer - Gettin Back in Vocal Shape Warm-up tracks

Donya Metzger - Wacky and Wonderful Warm-ups Cd

JW. Pepper

Sheet Music Plus

You Tube