

FUN FACTS about YOUR VOICE!
“I only try to sing better than myself!”

Vocal Skills

- Who
- What
- Where
- When
- How

GOAL: To sing with a **freely produced, rich, open and resonated sound.**

Posture: The Basis for All Good Singing: The position in which someone holds their body when standing or singing.

Goal: To build a natural singer’s stance in order to produce a free, open, rich and resonated sound.

Before “aligning” to sing - relax!

- massage temples, jaw, neck
- bring shoulders up to ears, hold, release
- shoulder rolls
- move chin: down, up, side to side, level
- hula hoop
- flex knees, un-plant feet

Common Posture Problems:

- locking the knees - body gets off balance; weight on balls of feet, soft knees
- swayback - shoulders are pulled back instead of using rib cage muscles
- chest droop - often happens at ends of phrases; rib cage “sits in the saddle”
- rounded shoulders
- lifted chin
- slumping of rib cage or bending forward from the waist
- head and/or jaw thrust forward

How to achieve and feel a *singer’s stance*:

- step into the corner
- airplane stretch
- a “joyful” heart
- puppet
- coat hanger
- rocking horse

Breathing: The Fuel for Singing: The process of moving air in and out of the lungs to facilitate gas exchange.

Goal: To control breath intake and exhale in order to produce a free, open, rich and resonated sound which flows on a cushion of air.

Before breathing “to sing” - reminders!

Inhalation:

- conscious activity relative to speaking
- silent
- shoulders and upper chest stay level
- expansion is felt in lower rib cage and the back
- abdominal area visibly expands
- breath lengths are predetermined
- begins with a relaxed jaw, a relaxed, open throat and an erect, expanded rib cage

Exhalation:

- conscious activity relative to speaking
- constant, outward air flow
- steady, outward air flow
- done while engaging vocal cords
- lower abs lift upward and inward
- resist letting rib cage drop quickly
- phrase lengths are predetermined
- begins with a relaxed jaw, a relaxed, open throat and an erect, expanded rib cage and a lowered diaphragm

Common Breathing Problems:

- inability to sustain phrase endings
- inconsistency of tone quality
- lack of tone flow

How to feel, achieve and develop breathing (inhalation and exhalation)

- fist exhale
- shushing - 3, 3, 7
- hissing - 8, 12, 16, etc
- counting
- measured exhale
- stream of sound
- staccato
- visualization - breathe “above the tone”; breathe through the jaw hinge
- football throw

Resonation: - The amplification and enrichment of tones.

Goal: To allow sound to resonate freely in open, relaxed resonating spaces and achieve a “balanced” sound, one which has both ring and roundness.

Before resonating - reminders!

- Quality of sound is dependent upon the size, shape and surface characteristics of the cavity in which it is resonated.
- Areas of resonance:
 - pharynx
 - oral cavity
 - nasal cavities
 - sinus cavities
- Singers may not feel the same sensation in the same place (forward, back, etc)
- Air is the actuator, vocal cords vibrate, resonators amplify
- Think of sound as having “dimension”
- A “lifted countenance” is a must, with upper teeth showing a bit
- Vowels are the main source of resonance.

Common Resonation Problems and Prescription:

- nasal - open up nasal resonators
- dark - consider tongue placement; avoid over-dropping the lower jaw; add a lifted facial countenance; “direct sound” to forward resonators; bend over and let sound fall out of the face
- forced - caused by over-singing; control the air flow; relax
- thin - access back resonators and/or open the mouth; think “cathedral”
- weighty/heavy - less air pressure; work from the “top - down”
- strident - add inner height with a raised palate; think “tall tunnel”; relax; “Oh” space

How to develop proper resonation:

- play and experiment with the voice
- think of the voice as an instrument, without “feelings”
- exercise both extremes of the vocal range
- don’t trust your ears - use a reliable, honest source

Resonation exercises and tips: to maximize personal amplification

- “Betty’s” exercises: 1 - 3 - 5 - 3 - 1 on Lah and Nah
- Bubble - allows a freely produced, easily resonated, mask-oriented sound
- Visualize and imagine a house with rooms that resonate - your mouth and head have “floors” and “rooms” which create various colors.
- Think of “geography” - sound overlaps and invades others’ space
- Go “sideways” on a high note
- Think “oxygen mask”

Articulation: The physical process by which sounds are shaped.

Goal: To shape sound clearly with undue tension and interruption of air.

Before articulating - reminders!

- In singing, vowels are sustained and consonants provide only split-second interruption.
- To form consonants, we must use the tongue, lips or soft palate.
- Tension from forming consonants must be released to sing vowel sounds.
- Not to be confused with:
 - articulation: refers to the physical use of the vocal mechanism
 - pronunciation relates to the articulation of words in a standard manner
 - enunciation is the manner of pronouncing words clearly and distinctly

Common Articulation Problems:

- over-working the jaw
- tension the muscles of the tongue
- over-dropping the jaw
- exploding consonants

How to develop proper articulation:

- practice tongue twisters
- use kinesthetic motions to smooth out consonant interference
- practice singing with a “quiet” jaw
- know the “alphabet”: understand and develop awareness of consonant formation including lip, tongue, jaw involvement
- mirror work to check for tongue “home position”
- sing with a “lazy” tongue

Articulation exercises: to release the tension in articulating

Many Mumbling Mice: bring the bottom lip up to the top lip on words with M

Puddle Uddle Ma: source, “Sing, Baby, Sing”

“Most vocal authorities agree that the five base elements of vocal production are posture, breathing, phonation, resonance and articulation. These five body actions build on each other in the order given.”

From the Sweet Adelines International Judge Category Description Book. (JCDB)