

# SINGING NOTES

## Part One: Starting Off

### Begin with breathing exercises.

Breathing exercises will allow you to better control the pitch and duration of your singing. It's no surprise: singers who can breathe deeply and consistently get better mileage out of their voice.

- Practice opening your throat opening. Relax and open the jaw like a fish might out of water. Start flexing your facial muscles a little bit in between.
- Try the following breathing exercise before you warm up:
  - Begin by inhaling a couple deep breaths of air. Imagine that the air is really heavy as you breathe it in.
  - Let the breath fall below your belly button, into your diaphragm. Exhale and repeat several times.
  - Get a light pillow-feather and practice keeping it in the air, sort of like you're juggling a feather with your air stream. Gradually blow the feather really high up, and try keeping it there.
  - Don't let your chest collapse as you keep the feather in the air. Try to keep the air stream coming from your diaphragm.

### Next, start warming up.

Your vocal chords are a muscle, just like your biceps, and need to get stretched before you do any heavy lifting. You can warm up in a variety of ways.

- Practice your major scales, starting with the middle C, moving down in half-steps before moving up. Don't push yourself before you're actually singing, and try to move slowly. As you continue to warm up, you'll get better at articulating all the notes in the scales.
  - The notes that you will hit start off as C-D-E-F-G-F-E-D-C and move either up or down one half-step for each new scale

### Find your range.

Your range is the measure of pitches you can sing between your lowest and highest notes. Try any number of classical musical scales (you can easily find them with a simple online search) and see which notes on the bottom and which notes on the top are impossible for you to clearly sing

### Try singing along to a song that you like with a voice recorder nearby.

Make sure the music is quiet and your voice is the real thing that the recorder picks up. After you're done singing, check if you are singing on key. Also check to see if you are:

- Articulating words, especially vowels, clearly. In the beginning, over-articulate the words; really practice on getting them right.
- Breathing correctly. Hard vocal parts will require you to stretch your voice out over a longer period of time. You'll need to be a strong breather for this.

### Drink plenty of water.

Drink lukewarm water for best results, as this will loosen your vocal chords. Give your body time to absorb the water. Avoid dairy products or thick drinks such as smoothies immediately before singing.

### Practice daily.

Every day, practice your breathing exercises, warm-up routine, and recorded singing. Listen for parts that you don't hit with your voice and keep chugging. It could take several weeks of practice just to get a single song down pat

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## Part Two: Developing Your Voice

### Learn to use your nose.

Good singing involves partial nasal placement; it is our body's soundboard. To avoid sounding nasal to others, however, your throat must be wide open with your tongue out of the way (slightly forward, touching the backs of bottom teeth when singing vowels). Nasality can often be heard in country singing and some R&B/Gospel, but can be unappealing to listeners

### Learn to "cover the voice" for a fuller sound.

Resonant, rounded sound is formed by opening the throat and by limiting the nasality. This is called "covering the voice." Be careful, however. If you cover it too much, it may become too airy and mushy sounding

### Practice singing your vowels.

Again, try to vocalize by using your diaphragm. The vowels, not the consonants, are what you really have to pay attention to.

- Do not involve your neck muscles in your singing. Try to keep your neck upright but relaxed.
- Practice keeping the back of your mouth open when you vocalize the vowels. Practice voicing the "ng" sound in training; the back of your mouth is closed. Now practice voicing the "ah" sound, like you're opening your mouth at the dentist. The back of your mouth is now open.

### Practice hitting the high notes.

High notes are the icing on top of the cake: not always necessary, but really wonderful when done right. You probably already know your range by now, so you also know which high notes you can hit and which ones you can't. Be sure to practice hitting the ones you can't yet reach. Practice will make perfect.

- Envision jumping as you hit the high note. Perhaps you're jumping onto a trampoline, or maybe you're just jumping up into the air. Imagine hitting your highest point as you reach the high note. Take an adequate breath and keep your mouth open. Hitting a high note doesn't mean you need to increase how loudly you sing

### Continue your breathing exercises.

Make breathing exercises an ongoing training opportunity. The better you get at breathing, the easier your vocal training will be.

- Try this breathing exercise<sup>[3]</sup> where you breathe in and hiss out. Make sure your hiss is very even and consistent. The goal is consistency:
  - Breathe in for 4 seconds, and then hiss the same breath out for 4 seconds.
  - Breathe in for 6 seconds, and hiss out for 12.
  - Breathe in for 2 seconds, and hiss out for 10.
  - Breathe in for 4 seconds, and hiss out for 16.
  - Breathe in for 2 seconds, and hiss out for 16.
  - Breathe in for 4 seconds, and hiss out for 20.
  - Breathe in for 2 seconds, and hiss out for 20.

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## Part Three: Putting It All Together

### Audition for a show

Be reasonable about how you expect to perform; if you've been singing for less than 3 months and have no formal training, it'll be an event — but that's what you want, right?

- If you're wanting to sing, you'll have to get used to singing in front of a large crowd of people, and in stressful situations. It's one thing to sing to yourself in your bedroom; it's another thing entirely to sing in front of dozens or maybe hundreds of people.

### Be sure to get a good teacher if you're serious about developing your skills.

Voice coaches will be able to give you really good feedback in real time, as well as tips and tricks. They will set a schedule for you and help you meet goals that you set for yourself. A voice coach is absolutely essential for anyone who wants to seriously become a singer.

### Once you're confident, perform a song unaccompanied and upload your video to YouTube.

The positive feedback you get will most likely far outweigh the negative feedback.

## Tips

- To aid with the practice of this breathing technique, (which is also used for meditations) place hands on the tummy to feel the correct movements. For men a tight belt can also be worn to push against.
- Any time you think of it, practice breathing correctly.
- Stay within the key. It is similar to singing harmonies when other notes can be sung in conjunction with the main note. Experiment! The voice is to simply expand as the vocal voice comes up as your real singing voice. To sing imagine that everything in your voice is to speak louder to project your voice is to expand it by inhaling and exhaling properly.
- Don't force breath out. Your breath should be flowing.
- Instead of pushing your tongue behind your teeth, try laying it on top of the bottom teeth, almost sticking out. Keep your jaw slack for best sound.

## Warnings

- Do not drink milk before singing as that causes sticky mucus to form in the mouth and throat.
- Do not sing too much for too long at the start. Vocal chords are muscles and need to be built up for strength and agility.
- Do not hold the lyrics sheet because that will stifle your styling/selling of the song. Keep your head up and glance around most of the time, but do not latch on to people's eyes or expressions.
- Do not smoke. This damages your lungs and voice and you need both for breathing and singing!
- Clearing your voice by harshly rasping coughs hurts the voice.
- When singing for long periods of time, it is worth taking a sip of honey cough medicine, or sucking on a sweet cough drop.

## Things You'll Need

- Buy a tape recorder with a built in mic, or find one that a microphone can be plugged into. A karaoke machine works great.
  - You can also use the recording function of your mp3 player if the quality is good to check your use of a microphone.
- A portable CD player or mp3 is needed to play the singer of your choice and the songs you wish to learn.
- Lyric sheets of the song you will be practicing.
- Music stand (or willing helper) for the lyric sheet.
- Water.