

ROUVAS

ACADEMY OF SINGING

TOP 10 TIPS TO BECOMING A BETTER SINGER

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1. DIAPHRAGM BREATHING

The way you breath can make a big difference to the way you sing. Try laying down and placing your hands around the bottom of your rib cage with your fingers over your diaphragm (just where your ribs part) so you can feel the expansion of your ribs as you Inhale gently. Try not to lift the upper chest as you do this. Repeat this exercise until you can do it standing up without raising your chest and shoulders as you inhale. Stand in front of a mirror so that you can check yourself. Remember the largest part of the lungs are are not up top.

2. BREATH CONTROL

Now that you have the breath in the right place you need to learn how to control and regulate the flow of the air. One exercise to help you to achieve this is by counting or reciting the letters of the alphabet using full tone. Take a diaphragm breath then speak in a medium voice but do not whisper. Make a note of how far you can go in one breath so you can monitor the improvement. Make sure you always do it at the same speed. Another good exercise is to take a diaphragm breath then allow the air to escape as slowly as possible by "hissing" (TSS). As you improve you will be able to last longer. Always maintain a good posture and try not to allow the ribs to collapse.

3. RELAXATION

It is important when we are singing to be aware of muscular tension of the throat, jaw and neck muscles. Keep your head level when singing and never raise it for high notes of lower it for low ones. Always practice gently and never push or force notes out. Always aim for quality not quantity. To produce a note of quantity without strain takes time and practice. High notes especially must be sung gently to start until the vocal apparatus has been strengthened so that volume is a result of breath pressure alone and not of muscular action.

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4. REGISTERS

The effective use of, and the changing of registers in the voice as we sing is vital for the longevity, quality and growth of the voice especially with regard to the female voice. Registers are the natural breaks that occur in the voice as we move up and down the scale. They can be separated into chest, middle and head and is where the focal point of the vibration occurs. In the female voice, singing gently up the scale a click can usually be heard as the voice naturally changes from one register to another. (Middle to head usually around G or A). The challenge is to blend the registers so that the change is seamless to the ear. Vocal exercises using a downward scale (starting gently on the high note) and bringing the voice down from the head to the middle and chest with a seamless break is a good way to start. Use the word "Hood" starting the scale around B or C.

5. HEAD VOICE

Is also valuable in male voices as it can make high notes easier to produce and is a wonderful tool that can be used as a stepping stone to the "full voice". The previous exercise mentioned earlier can be used to extend the range by starting on a high note in the head and bringing it down then allowing it to thicken as you descend. Do not confuse "Head Voice" and "Falsetto". They are two different sounds and feel different. Head Voice can be described as a light full voice.

6. THE JAW

The use of the jaw or opening of the mouth is also a very important part of voice production. The higher the note the more drop of the jaw is necessary. Dropping the jaw helps to overcome rigidity of the muscles under the jaw and throat and also helps to open the throat allowing a clear passage way for the sound assuming the tongue is relaxed i.e. Lays flat and not arched at the back or raised at the front. It should lay flat with a slight furrow sitting behind the bottom teeth.

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7. PLACEMENT OF SOUND

Another important point is the placement of the note you are singing. I have come across a couple of problems. One is singers pushing the sound into their nose producing a "honky" sound and the other, singing from the back of the throat. Both are constricted and are in my opinion unpleasant to the ear. "Speech level" singing is a great idea as long as speech is placed forward and not in the areas mentioned. Placing the sound at the roof of the mouth for "full voice" and in the head for "head voice" are the ideal places for best results. As you are unable to move sound by touching it the only way is to "think it" where you want it. With practice it is possible to feel the vibration in these areas.

8. HIGH NOTES

It's important to realise that singing high notes easily is a matter of skill. Using force will not only create wrong action on the vocal cords but create tension of the external throat muscles which is the reverse of what we are trying to achieve. This can manifest in all kinds of vocal problems. To increase your vocal range with skill, sing the high notes gently and extend yourself little by little. Practicing gently helps you to relax and produce the note without strain and so the building process begins.

9. BELTING

Belting is a technique whereby the middle register is pushed up past its natural break. Although stressful and sometimes damaging to the voice this eliminates the need to change registers and blend them. Although this is a "quick fix" for the female singer, giving her voice a "full" sound quickly, it is very limiting and therefore the full potential of the voice will never be realised. The head voice initially can be thin and weak, however with exercise it slowly overtakes the results of "belting" and far surpasses it in power and beauty. All of my students have managed to achieve a "Pop" sound using the registers without ever encountering voice problems. Males are advised to follow the same logic. Use head voice to cultivate and prepare the voice for the more demanding "full Voice."

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10. HABITS TO CULTIVATE

Learn to think before you sing. Always have a mental conception of the tone, vowel or note you want to produce before you actually sing it. Take your breath early and do not snatch it just before you begin singing. Mentally anticipate high notes before you sing them, think ahead so you are prepared. Never reach for high notes by thinking "UP". Train yourself to think down. Any feeling of strain is an indication of wrong action. Do not confuse strain with physical support. And finally take care of your voice, it is an instrument so don't abuse it by yelling or talking loud.

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