

VOCAL EXERCISES

Regular weekly use will build their understanding and a better overall sound!

The following are examples of warm-ups that re-enforce various aspects of good singing.
Throughout, good posture and breathing habits should be maintained!

I. PHYSICAL WARM-UPS!

“As for an athlete – it’s a must!”

Body Stretches - ‘Reach’ for the ceiling keeping shoulders down... (both arms/then alternating). Grab a Star in each hand and slowly pull it down from the sky in front of you then split them out to sides... Shake out arms...

Shoulder – with arms extended out to sides, make small circles with hands and arms in same direction several rotations – then reverse direction... – *shake it out!*

Now Roll Shoulders up-forward-down-back-up! Repeat several times...

Then reverse likewise! – *shake it out!*

Head rolls - Keep them easy, don’t ‘over’ extend and NEVER roll head back!

Standing... drop head to right shoulder, gently roll chin towards chest and continue on so left ear is over left shoulder and STOP! Go back from whence you came SLOWLY! Repeat!

Neck stretch – gently drop right ear to right shoulder. With RIGHT hand on top of head, gently pull head towards right shoulder as your left hand reaches for the floor – breathe! And stretch further on exhale (2-4 breaths). Release! And do other side... – *shake it out!*

Spine align/roll-up stretch. (Bend over from waist, allow arms and head to hang freely, take several long low breaths allowing your body to sink lower with each exhale....

SLOWLY roll up - vertebrae by vertebrae (keep breathing) rolling the chin to your chest and note the head comes up last until you are standing tall! Breathe. – *shake it out!*

II. POSTURE

“Like the alignment on your car!”

- Feet, slightly less than shoulder width apart, one slightly ahead of the other so that the weight of your body rests on the “balls” of your feet (NOT your heels).
- Knees should be relaxed and slightly bent – never locked!
- The pelvis should feel slightly “tucked” as if to float forward – suspended from the spine.
- The rib cage should feel full and buoyant! Arms dangling freely at the sides.
- The head should feel suspended as by a balloon – large enough to hold it upright, but not so large as to stretch the neck.
- Once there, note how your ears are over your shoulders – which are over your hips- which are over your ankles... Nice tall line and straight spine – top to bottom!

Take a few moments to experiment with increasing the size of the suspending balloon... Then add a weight hanging from the tailbone... Allow your body to literally “feel” suspended in air.

III. BREATHING

“Switch to manual controls.”

The singing breath should always be: **LOW – SILENT – CALMING**

8-8-12 {explain SUSPEND first!} Have choir, with hands on tummies, Exhale! Then Inhale on an 8 count – expanding your tummy. Now “SUSPEND” the air (not out or in without HOLDING the breath) for another 8 count. Then exhale bottom-up keeping chest tall/open on a 12 count. REPEAT! Then breathe normal a few moments and do 8-8-12 all over again...

Nnnnee Breathing... (here and there to remind...) Say Nnnnee! Feel where air flows through the ‘eee’ vowel? Now, blow out all air, say ‘Nnnn’ and without interruption **Inhale QUICKLY through ‘eee space’ silently!** You should feel the lower tummy drop & expand! This is where ALL breathes should go!

Doorway - Stand with arms outward to sides – elbows even with shoulders, arms bent – As if standing in a doorway and holding onto the door frame... In this position, take several long SILEN relaxed breaths... Note where the air/breath goes!!! TUMMY OUT – Right!?!?!... Relax... (This is a GOOD stance for singing difficult phrases periodically as it Forces the breath into the tummy!)

IV. SINGING!

“It’s NOT Natural, think backwards!”

“Loud is easy! Soft singing takes 3 times the support/energy!”

VOCAL WARM-UPS!

[AFLAC –turn your duck around!]

1. **Raspberries or Lip trills...** 5-4-3-2-123454321___ breath! (*moving up the scale*)
(GOAL: maintain a constant/even ‘buzz’ to keep air-flow steady throughout range!
The idea here is to warm the chords and get the air moving in a constant steady flow. This exercise can also incorporate various vowel formations to get the entire vocal tract moving and stretching. Use the following vowel sounds behind the fluttering lips: –oo, –oh, –ih, and –ah. Sometimes –ee works well with some female voices in their higher range. Move through the mid-range first, and then expand to the outer, comfortable, limits of the voice. Keep the air moving!)
2. **Open Mouth Ng!** utilize 5 tone down and 123454321___, breathe!
(**Ng-Spot** [sing-ing-ing!] is where vowels are formed and where the voice resonates freely!)
3. **Tongue-stretch:** Keeping the tip of tongue placed lightly behind the upper front teeth think AH vowel at first... You can also change vowels: ee-ay-ah-oh-oo (*two pitches each...*) 1-3-2-4-3-5-4-2-1___ breathe! *This will help to release/relax the back of the tongue and open the vocal tract/vowel space! (here and there to remind...)*
4. **(Breath) EE-OH:** ee-oh, ee-oh, ee-oh, ee-oh, ee___, oh___ x3
5, 4, 3, 2, 1234, 5432, 1234, 5432, 1234, 54321 breath! (as cut-off!)
[upper range switch to: Yah-dee yah-dee yah_____... etc.]
RELEASE remaining air on third run to prepare for the upcoming breath!
5. **SCALES:** on Ee_ Ay_ Ah___ 1234, 5678, 987654321 –breath!
Keep moving to maintain breathing – singing pattern! You can then DOUBLE the scale (sing it twice with one breath). Suggest starting on C Major and move up ½ steps, have tenors and sopranos go well into their upper range but allow basses/altos to drop out where appropriate (tell them when! Typically upper not E or F).
6. **Bimm-Boh!** (a fun one WHICH aids in tuning and listening as a choir!)
Build on chord: Basses = root, Tenors = 5th, Altos = 3rd, Sopranos upper octave Root!
(In C Major: C3 – G3 – E4 – C5)
Basses start... Bim-bo Bim-bo, Bim-bo Bim-bo
ADD Tenors for 4 Bim-bo Bim-bo, Bim-bo Bim-bo,
ADD Altos for 4 Bim-bo Bim-bo, Bim-bo Bim-bo
then ADD Sops for 4 Bim-bo Bim-bo, Bim-bo Bim-bo
All sing BAH! and HOLD CHORD!
Director indicates group move up/down by ½ steps! (one, two, or three – make them watch you and keep in tune!). Start over on last pitch... Repeat several times!!!

Your choir is now READY for REHEARSAL!

V. LANGUAGES

“Sing on Vowels, not consonants!”

‘High-German’ is considered “proper” for singing unless a piece is written/composed in a dialect... Refer to a good German dictionary with pronunciation guide when there is more than one opinion...

“Consonants should never be louder than the vowel!”
(otherwise the language and voices sound distorted...)

Tall Vowels = Ng! Singing an [i] or ee vowel like *Lie-der*, the tendency is to spread the vowel as in a smile shape thus sounding thin and strident (unpleasant). Work to turn the vowel vertical! Like the little “French” pig who went to market, “*We we we we weeee...*” Then release and say it over-smiling... Note the smiled one sounds harsh, edgy, and thin... Repeat the first one to get the ‘right’ feeling. This vertical [i] ee is preferred for it’s rounded tone!

Ng... when in doubt – get it out! You can have the singers sing entire songs or phrases on Ng while ‘mouthing’ the words... Then sing again with text... The resulting tone should have a rounder more relaxed quality... And more pleasant to the listener! (*hands in-front of ears again...*)

[i] ee becomes [I] ih When the notes for the ladies go above D4 (*second line down in treble clef*).

Ah = Oh! These two vowels are formed exactly alike in the mouth. The ONLY difference is a slight rounding of the lips for the Oh! (*careful not to turn the diphthong to Oh-oo...*)

VI. COMMUNICATION FACTOR

“Text meaning/translation – in depth!”

Create and use a “Word-For-Word” translation unless everyone is fluent in the language you’re singing! *Singers should be encouraged to write it into their music so they constantly SEE what they are singing about so as to ‘sing with feeling/emotion!’*

From the *Word-For-Word* Translation, create a *poetic translation* to print in your program! *This will please audience members who do not speak German and allow them to fully enjoy your performance!*

Never rely on translations printed in the music as they are rarely a true translation of the text! Typically, singing-translations are created to sound ‘pretty...’ and come close to the original meaning. *It is very difficult to create a ‘sing-able’ translation for a song composed to fit another language...*

I hope you find this information and exercises helpful! Please feel free to photocopy the WARM-UP sections as Hand-outs to your choirs! I know we will be using them on a regular basis!

SING-cereLy Yours!

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Document created for Directors Forum 2012