



Care for Your Voice

Whether you are a performer on stage or a teacher in a lecture hall, if your livelihood depends on your voice, you must take special care of your instrument. You need to be able to notice the signs when things go wrong and know how to protect your voice and ready it for your work.

Be aware of your voice

Be aware of any changes to your voice. Unfortunately, in most cases, people are unaware their voice is degrading, especially when they lose their voice for the first time. Overwork, stress and illness can have extremely detrimental effects on your instrument. Know the signs of fatigue, and dysfunction.

- Has your voice become gravelly, toneless or breathy?
- Has your range been affected when singing?
- Does your voice suddenly sound deeper or higher?
- Does your throat feel sore, achy, or irritated?
- Has it become an effort to perform?
- Do you find you are continually clearing your throat?
- Do you have a continuous tickle!

Take Care of Your Voice

Avoid

- Caffeine - it can cause the body to lose water and make the vocal folds dry.
- Alcohol - as well as causing the body to lose water, it also irritates the mucous membranes that line the throat.
- Some Medication - avoid or limit the use of medications that dry out the vocal folds, including some common cold and allergy medications. If you have voice problems, ask your doctor which medications would be safest for you to use.
- Smoking - don't smoke and avoid second-hand smoke. Smoke irritates the vocal folds.
- Spicy Foods - spicy foods can cause stomach acid to move into the throat, and cause heartburn.
- Extreme cold - wrap up warm. Heat can also be difficult.
- Biscuits, Pastry and Crisps - obvious until you forget.
- Chlorine - if swimming is your exercise, avoid too much chlorine.
- Stress and Tension - bad for our health and voice.
- Falsifying - don't force the larynx up or down to achieve changes in intonation. Keep it neutral!
- Tip the Head - keep the head level! Extra strain is caused by pressing down on the throat.
- Coughing - avoid coughing when you clear your throat, it causes trauma to your vocal cords. Focus on creating a sound with good resonance.
- Don't Shout! - avoid arguments, yelling traumatizes the vocal cords and adds undue stress!
- Avoid using the extremes of your vocal range in a performance, such as screaming or whispering. Talking too loudly and too softly can both stress your voice.



Indulge!

- Hydrate - drink plenty of water.
- Warm-up - your vocal cords are muscles, warm-up before a presentation or performance.
- Exercise - both physically and vocally. Exercise increases stamina and muscle tone. This helps provide good posture and breathing.
- Include plenty of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables in your diet. These foods contain vitamins A, E, and C. They also help keep the mucus membranes that line the throat healthy.
- Get enough rest. Physical fatigue has a negative effect on the voice.
- Practice vocal exercises to gain clean resonance before performing.
- Practice good breathing techniques before and when singing or talking to support your voice, vocalising without steady breath support, puts a great strain on the voice.
- Keep head level. Avoid looking down and closing the neck when speaking or singing. Also cradling the phone between the head and shoulder for extended periods of time can cause muscle tension in the throat and neck.
- Neutral Larynx - ensure the larynx is relaxed and in a NEUTRAL position, rest the larynx and vocal cords on the breath.
- Learn the use of acute vowel/vocal sounds
- Learning how to MAINTAIN GOOD RESONANCE throughout a performance!

General Recommendations

- Avoid mouthwash or gargles that contain alcohol or irritating chemicals. Try not to overuse your voice. If not working, avoid speaking or singing when your voice is hoarse or tired.
- Rest your voice when you are sick. Illness puts extra stress on your voice.
- At the first sign of a possible sore throat, gargle with a saltwater solution.
- Inhalation with steam. If you have a sore throat and are having to perform, use Friars Balsam. Tip! Put the bowl in a plastic carrier bag before filling it with hot water and Friars Balsam. Once finished you can just throw the bag away and not the bowl!
- Exercise throughout the day for short periods of time until the voice feels in a good position before a performance.
- Although drinking plenty of fluids and extra water is important before a performance, avoid washing away all the saliva in your throat with too much plain water. This will quickly make the throat dry, and you will then need more water, sometimes a vicious circle. *Personal experience, I find a bottle of water with a little amount of quality orange or lemon juice for taste will help the mouth to salivate, and better lubricate the voice. Like me, you may find you won't need to keep going back for a drink until after the performance or need the toilet!*
- If you have a tickle or some mucus on the cords, rather than coughing, try sucking the mucus off the cords. To do this, close your lips, and use the tongue to push up on the roof of the mouth to create a vacuum at the bottom of the throat. When experienced it really helps.
- If you feel breathless whilst performing, concentrate on acute vowels and resonance. Avoid pushing, and use space as your amplifier (even if you're using a microphone).



Fine Voice Academy

Academy of Singing, Music and the Performing Arts

Vowel Exercises

English Vowels

A - think of **a** as in **Hay**.

E - as in **Bee**

I - as in "**eye**"

O - as in "**Tow**"

U - as in "**Music**"

Italian Vowels

A - sung "**are**", think of **a** as in **Father**.

E - sung "**a**" as in **Day**.

I - sung "**ee**" as in **See or Pizza**.

O - sung "**o**" as in **On**

U - oo as in **Moon or Tune**

Practice Vowel Progression

ee - ay - ah - or -oo reversed **oo - or - ah - ay - ee**

Eeyore

Practice Eeyore, as in the donkey from A A Milne's "Winnie-the-Pooh".

Ee - or

In speech or singing, vowels are often preceded and finished by sounds produced from the opening or closing of the mouth. These interruptions to the vowels are normally clearly recognisable as consonants. But even the word "a", a letter\vowel on its own, requires an opening before the vowel can be produced, a structured start to the vowel and a finish to the sound. Practice these vowel sounds below spoken or sung, projected with good diaphragm support. Go through the alphabet using each consonant. You will find each consonant can affect each vowel in a different way. Try to be consistent in the production of the vowel.

Vowel Sound	add (ma)	Add letter B	next letter C	Then D	Etc.....
ah	(ah)ma	B(ah)ma	C(ah)ma	D(ah)ma	Z(ah)ma
ow	(ow)ma	B(ow)ma	C(ow)ma	D(ow)ma	Z(ow)ma
aye	(aye)ma	B(aye)ma	C(aye)ma	D(aye)ma	Z(aye)ma
ee	(ee)ma	B(ee)ma	C(ee)ma	D(ee)ma	Z(ee)ma
eye	(eye)ma	B(eye)ma	C(eye)ma	D(eye)ma	Z(eye)ma
oy	(oy)ma	B(oy)ma	C(oy)ma	D(oy)ma	Z(oy)ma