Tone

April 9, 2020

Learning Target:
What does the word tone mean in music and how does it help us to make better music?

Warm-Up activity: Let's experiment with our voices!

To start out today, we are going to try and change the sound of our voices. As we do this, you can either sing one long note, or sing a phrase of music, such as "Happy Birthday" or "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."

First, pinch your nose and try to sing so that you sound like a goose honking (have some fun with this!)

Next, sing the same notes, but unpinch your nose and try and sound like a 4 year old kid singing (yes, it should sound obnoxious!)

Finally, sing the same notes, and try your best opera impression, very dramatic and mature!

We use the word “tone” to describe the quality and character of our singing voice

Tone - Definition

The a musical or vocal sound with reference to its pitch, quality, and strength.

I want to a have a good tone in MY singing! So... how do I do that?

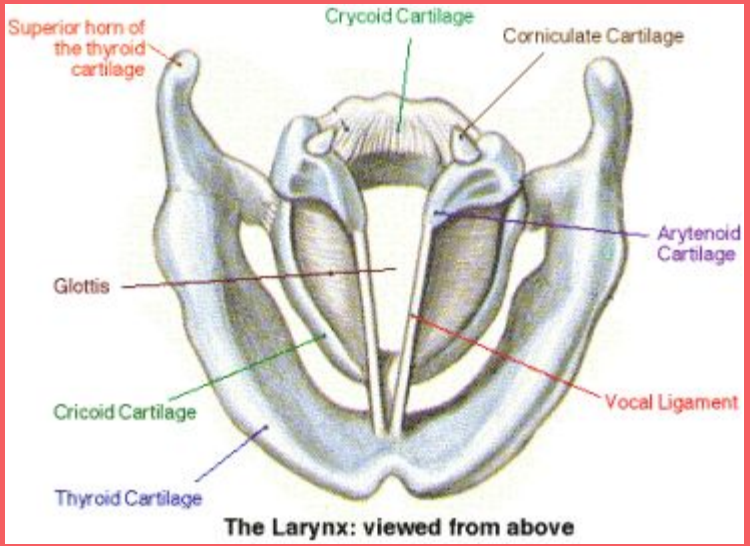
I'm so glad you asked! We do have a lot of control over the character of our singing voice and the tone that we produce. But in order to understand how we control our tone, we need to understand a bit more about how singing works.

Let's talk a little bit about the anatomy of your voice and which parts of your body help support your voice.

We'll go over all this in more detail in a later lesson, but this will give us an introduction.

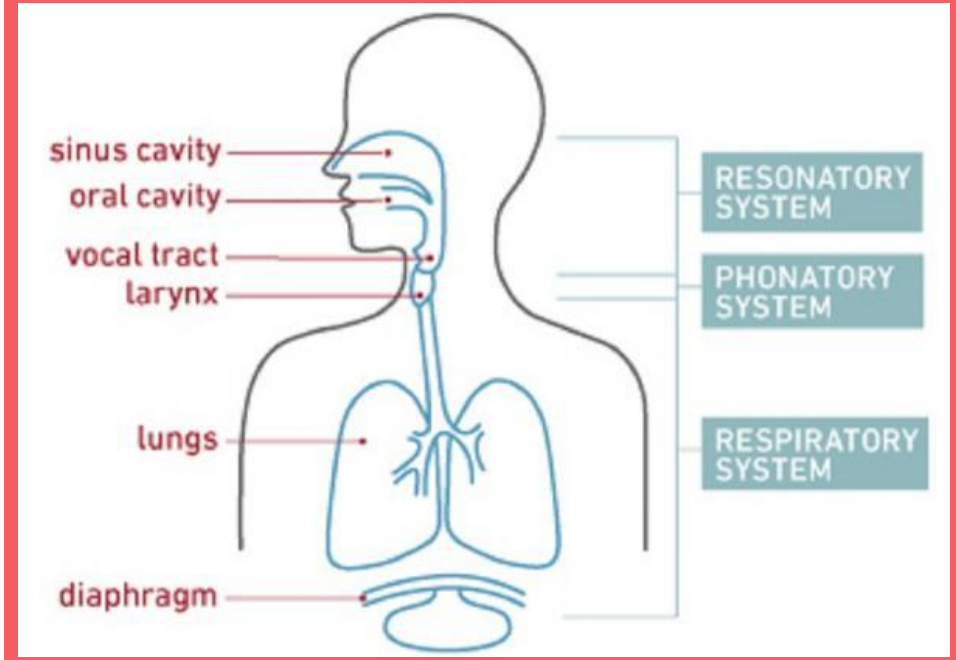
Stop #1: Your Voice Box

The sound of your voice is generated in your larynx, which we also call your voice box. We call the act of your voice box making sound “phonating”.



Stop # 2: Where that sound echoes

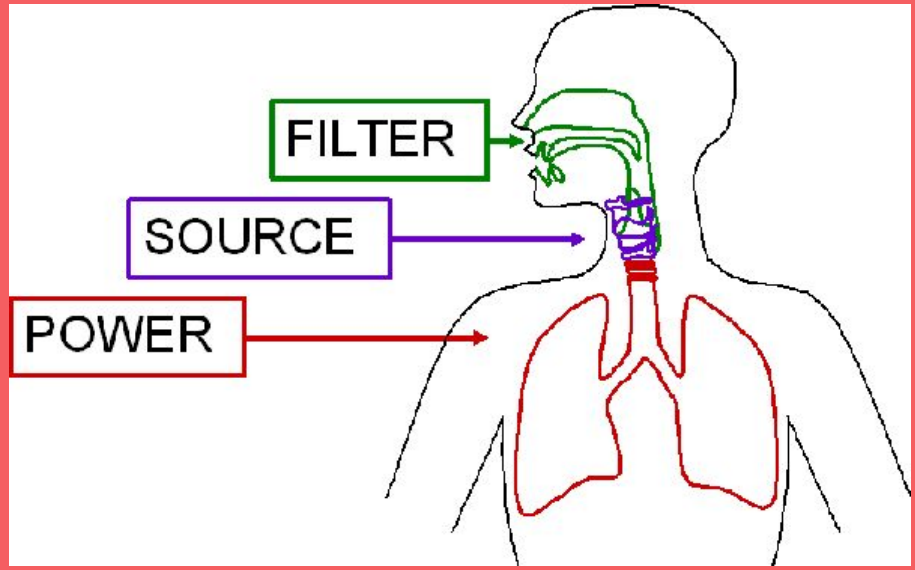
When the sound of your voice leaves your larynx, it echoes or “resonates” in your throat (vocal tract), mouth (oral cavity) and nasal passages (sinus cavity)



A system that works together

Your speaking and singing voice works because the different parts of your body work together:

- Your lungs and diaphragm provide the power
- Your larynx makes the sound
- Your resonation chambers filter that sound into a nice, rich singing or speaking voice



So what part of this process can we control?

We can’t really change anything happening in our larynx. But we CAN focus on our breathing and on how we make our vowels.

This is where singing technique comes from

Breathing: By focusing on taking deep breaths and using our breath effectively, we support our singing voices better and provide stability to our singing tone.

Singing with tall vowels: When we sing with tall vowels and an open throat, we are working on opening our phonation system, the filter for our singing sound.

A more open System = More space for sound to echo = A more mature and rich tone!

Let’s experiment!

Here’s a fun phrase for you:

Say “Tacky, nasty Takis sauce!” three or four times. Experiment with saying it in your low voice, saying it in your high voice, then singing it in your low voice and high voice.

When you say the first two words (tacky and nasty) the vowels in your mouth are naturally flat, and don’t have much resonance (echo) to them. When you say the second two words (Takis and sauce) the vowels in your mouth are naturally taller and have a better tone.

Last, try singing the phrase like a little kid, and then like a British opera singer. You may notice that the second time you have taller vowels in your mouth!

Singing with tall vowels is the biggest way we can improve our singing tone

When we make more space inside our mouths, we give our voices more space to resonate, and that makes our singing sound better! We get that space by singing with an open throat, dropping our jaws, and singing with tall vowels!

Now listen and evaluate

Click on the link to the professional choir on the right and listen to their singing tone. Write down at least three words you hear them sing where they use good, tall vowels.

Voces8 singing Sound of Silence