



8th Grade Vocal Music

Vocal Technique Review

May 19, 2020



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Lesson: May 19, 2020

Objective/Learning Target:

We will review the concepts we have learned over the last month regarding practicing vocal technique.



Warm-Up Activity

Find a recording of your favorite song on YouTube, and sing along to the song. As you sing, practice taking deep breaths before each phrase:

1. Your mouth and throat are open
2. Your shoulders and collarbones are set and not moving
3. Your ribs expand outward as you feel your diaphragm open up the bottom half of your lungs



2nd Warm-Up Activity

Find a recording of your favorite song on YouTube, and sing along to the song. As you sing, practice maximizing your resonating chambers:

1. Your throat is open and relaxed
2. Your jaw is dropped low and you are making space in your mouth
3. You are focusing your sound through the “mask” in your face



Singing using the whole body

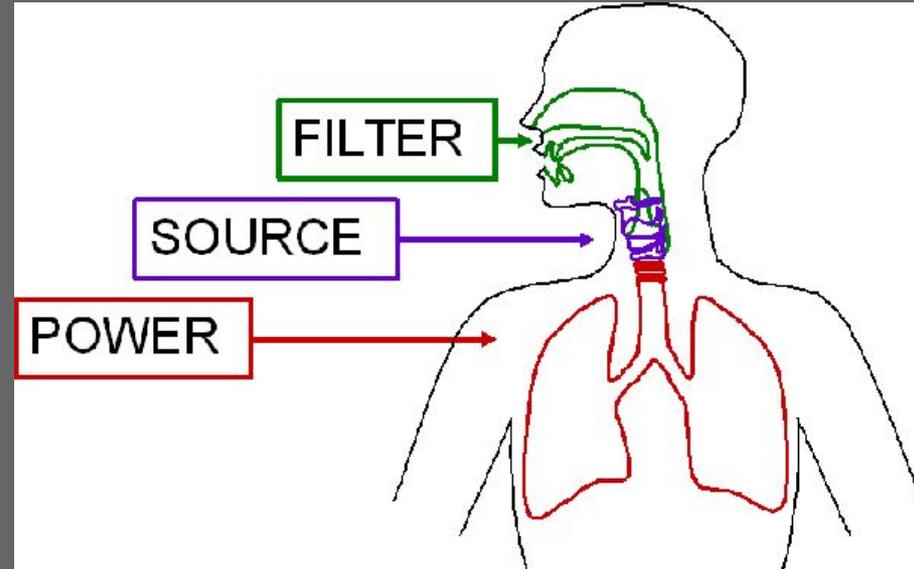
In previous lessons, we have focused on three different components of singing:

1. Breathing and breath support
2. How shaping our vowels shapes our vocal tone
3. Proper posture to support tension-free singing

These components all work together to produce healthy, strong, beautiful singing.

Singing using the whole body

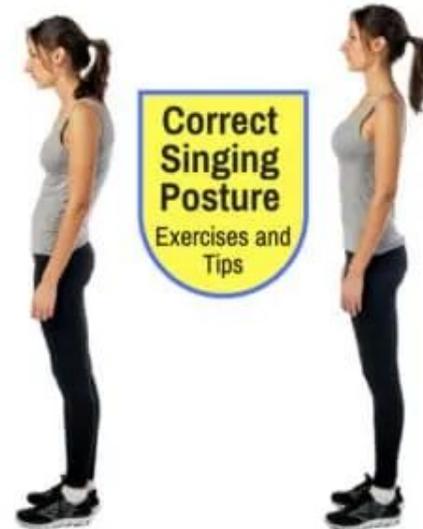
Today, we will focus on putting those pieces together. We'll focus on our **body** first, then prepare our **breathing** to support our sound, and finally **sing** with a tall, relaxed, well-supported sound.



First Posture Activity

[Click on this link to review Musicaroo's article on singing with proper posture.](#)

Read through the article and try the posture exercises they describe in the article at home!





Second Posture Activity

Now, let's try setting yourself in proper posture. Bending at the waist, dangle your upper body down and relax your arms so your hands drop to the floor.

Now, slowly raise yourself up again, one vertebrae at a time, until you are all the way back to standing.

As you line your body back up, do a full body check: are all of your body parts set in the places they should be to support healthy singing?



First Breathing Exercise

Sit up straight, or stand tall. Now, pretend that you have a delicious shake in one hand (you get to pick the flavor; you've earned it!). You are about to “drink” the shake through a straw.

Hold the pretend shake up to your mouth in one hand, while setting the other hand gently on your side, resting on your rib cage.

Now, with slightly pursed lips as though using a straw, “drink” your shake, pulling a deep, full breath into your lungs. Breathe in until your lungs are all the way filled up!

First Breathing Exercise:

Here is a quick video demonstration of me holding my pretend shake, drinking in through my “straw”, and feeling my ribs move out as my diaphragm contracts and my lungs fill up.





Second Breathing Exercise

Once you have your full breath, it's time to use it! For this first activity, we are going to release our air slowly while making a “shhh” sound, as though you were trying to quiet someone.

While you make the “shhh” sound, do your best to keep your ribcage open and your tummy muscles relaxed and out.

Eventually, as you run out of air, your muscles will need to collapse back in. But the more we resist that, the more control over your singing breath you have!



Second Breathing Exercise

Let's add some counts to your actions:

Breathe in slowly while counting to 4 in your head. Try not to fill your lungs all the way until you reach number 4. Make sure you are counting slowly.

Then, make a “shh” sound as you count to 8. As you make the sound, focus on keeping your lower torso open and expanded.

After you reach 8, you can relax and release the rest of your air.

Second Breathing Exercise

This is what that should look like:





Second Breathing Exercise

Once you feel like you are doing that successfully, add to your challenge:

This time, as you make the “shh” sound, count all the way to 12 before you release and take a breath.

See if you can make it all the way to 12, then 16, and finally 20!



Singing Tract activity

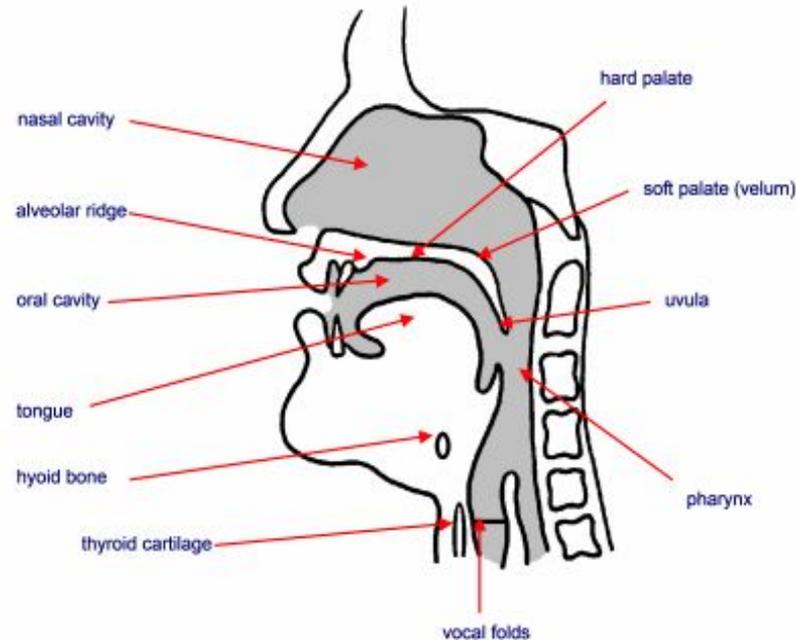
Before we explore more singing exercises, let's review the main components to the **vocal tract** - the filter we use to shape our singing sound.

The vocal tract is the space above your voice box that the sound of your voice resonates in. It is generally divided into three sections.

Singing Tract activity

The vocal tract starts with the **pharynx**, continues with the **oral cavity**, and then leads to the **nasal cavity**.

While all three are important, the **oral cavity** is the component we have the most control over.





Singing Tract activity

To help us remember how these parts of your mouth and throat work together, let's rewatch Tyley Ross sing in various vocal styles while inside an MRI. This allows us to see the voicebox, pharynx, nasal passages, and parts of the oral cavity (the **tongue**, **soft palate**, **uvula**, **lips** and **teeth**) all working together to create a singing sound.

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Vocal Tone Activities

Now we are going to do a series of exercises to practice our awareness of and control over the different components of the vocal tract.

As you practice these, make sure you are using good posture and supporting our sound with good breathing just like we practiced!

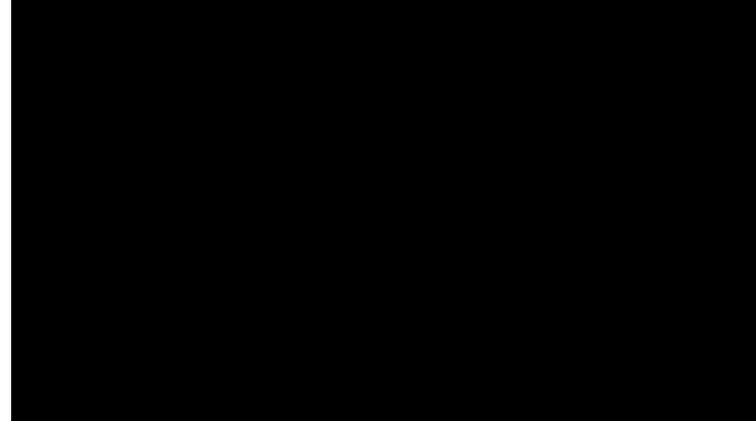


The Resonatory System:

The pharynx ACTIVITY

Breathe in like you are yawning again, but this time, say the vowel “Oh” as you breathe out.

Your jaw should be low, and you should sound like a dramatic opera singer who just realized something!



The Resonatory System:

The nasal cavity **ACTIVITY**

Breathe in as we have been, and then start singing a note in the upper part of your range while making an “ng” sound. Hold that note for a few seconds, then open up to an “ah” sound and feel where that echoes.

The “ng” sound naturally echoes in the mask!



The Resonatory System:

The oral cavity ACTIVITIES

For this activity, once again you start by breathing in with a relaxed, open mouth and throat. Then, sing a five note scale going down while make a “yah” vowel.

Your goal as you sing is to make the vowel sound tall and open by making space in your mouth!



The tongue - ACTIVITY

Sing a 5-note scale (Sol-Fa-Mi-Re-Do) going down, and as you sing every note, sing between an “ah” vowel and an “ee” vowel.

As you sing, feel what your tongue is doing with each of those vowels.



The soft palate - ACTIVITY

Breathe in like you are going to yawn, and feel the back of the roof of your mouth stretch up like a dome.

After you have done this a few times, try making a big, dramatic opera-sigh on an “oh” vowel, and feel the space inside your mouth you have created.





The lips - ACTIVITY

Drop your jaw down low, open your mouth tall and think about making space in the back of your throat and roof of your mouth. Now, sing a nice, tall “ah” vowel on one note and hold it.

Then, moving only your lips and without changing anything inside your mouth, bring your lips to an “oo” vowel shape (where your lips are pursed together).

Now, sing that note again, and switch your lips between those two shapes. Remember: try not to move anything else in your mouth!

The lips - ACTIVITY

It should wind up looking and sounding something like this:





Putting it all together

To wrap up today, we are going to participate in a series of singing activities organized by members of the professional singing group Voces8.

As you learn the music they teach you and sing along, focus on using your whole body to support your singing, including good posture, deep breathing, relaxed throat, and tall vowel placement inside your mouth!

