



Vocal Music Virtual Learning

# MS Honor Choir

## Vocal Technique: Breathing (Part II)

May 5, 2020



MS Honor Choir  
Lesson: May 5, 2020

**Objective/Learning Target:**

What exercises and activities can we do to help build the skill of proper breathing for singing?



# Warm-Up Activity:

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. Breath in until your lungs are all the way filled up!



# Warm-Up Activity:

If you did this right, you should have not only filled your lungs completely, you also should have felt your ribs move outwards with your other hand.

If you did, than you were breathing correctly for good singing. Good job!

If you did not feel your ribs move, than experiment with it again and see if you can get to where your ribs are constantly moving outwards a little bit every time you take a deep breath in!

# Warm-Up Activity:

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.





# Warm-Up Activity:

Now, set your hands to your side and do the exercise again, still “drinking through your straw” as you breathe in.

This time, close your eyes as you breathe in and focus on what it feels like in your lower stomach muscles and ribcage as you breathe in. You should feel a slight pressure or pull inside your torso, right behind your belly button.

This is your diaphragm working!



# Warm-Up Activity:

Sitting up tall again, close your eyes. This time, before you breathe in, drop your jaw and open up your mouth wide and tall.

Make an “Oh” vowel shape, like the middle of the word “MinnesOta”. You don’t actually have to say the vowel, just form your mouth into that shape.

Now breathe in with your “Oh” vowel and recreate that feeling in your lower abdomen by taking another deep breath from your diaphragm.

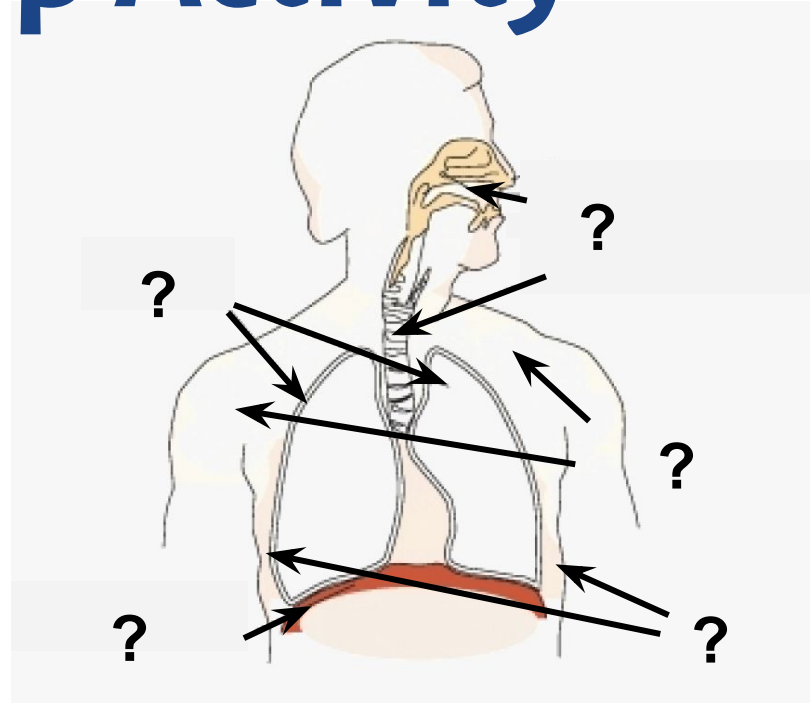
**This is our proper singing breath!!!!!!!**

# Second Warm-Up Activity

Let's review from yesterday.

Draw this diagram on your own paper and then label the different parts of the body the question marks are pointing to.

(Your drawing doesn't have to be perfect!)



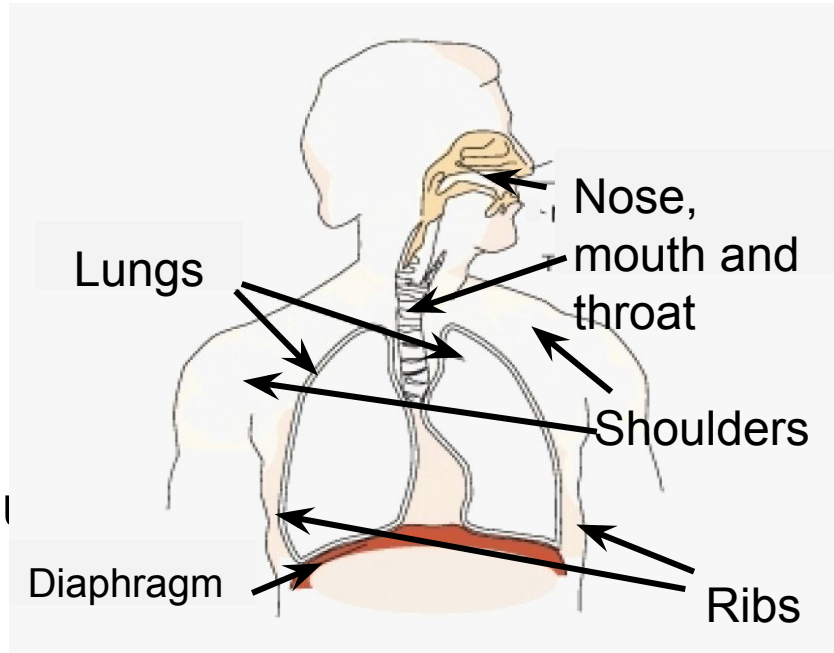


# Second Warm-Up Activity

Let's see how you did!

Here are the labels for the different body parts we focused on yesterday.

Each of these body parts plays a role in proper breathing technique for singing.





# Breathing for Singing

In yesterday's lesson, we learned what it should feel like to take a proper breath for singing.

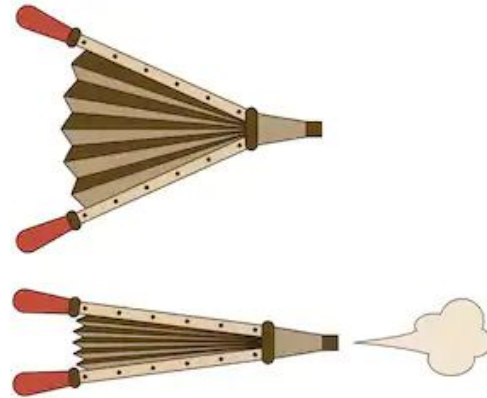
Today, we are going to explore some exercises that will help us take the power from this deep, fulfilling breath and channel it into powerful, supported singing.

## Breathing for Singing: Looking at a Bellows

To start today, we are going to look at a bellows. Bellows are those accordion-looking devices we use to blow air onto a fireplace. You have probably seen one before:



Bellow are pretty simple devices: you use your hands to open up the flaps, and the bellows fills with air. Then you use your hands to squeeze the flaps back together, and the air pushes out the nozzle into your fire.



Here is a video of a bellows in action in case you haven't seen one before:





# Breathing for Singing: That's how your lungs work

Remember, your lungs cannot move, inflate or deflate on their own. They are like balloons inside your body.

Your abdominal muscles and oblique muscles, working with your ribcage and your diaphragm, act like the hands opening up the bellows. As you expand your tummy muscles outward and downward, and open up your ribcage, your lungs fill up just like that bellows!

## Video break: Exploring this process more with Dr. Dan

Let's hear an expert, Dr. Daniel Robinson, break this down some more. Pay attention to the different roles the diaphragm and the tummy muscle (the abdominals and obliques) play in the breathing process:

"I believe it's the **birth right**  
of every person to sing."

- Daniel (Kay) Robinson





WE





# First Practice Activity

We just talked about how your lungs function like a bellows, but there is a very important way that using a bellows and breathing for singing are different - **exhaling**.

After a bellows fills up with air, the next step is to squeeze the handles together and let the air whoosh out into the fireplace. But in singing, once we fill our lungs up with air, we don't want that air to whoosh out right away; then we can't use it for singing!



# First Practice Activity

We want to be able to guide the release of that air to support our singing sound. To do this, once our lungs are filled up with air, we are going to stop acting like a bellows.

Take another deep breath like before:

- Sitting or standing tall
- Open mouth and throat with an “Oh” vowel shape
- Breath in low and deep, opening up your ribs and lower tummy muscles



# First Practice Activity

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!



# First Practice Activity

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.

# First Practice Activity

This is what that should look like:





# First Practice Activity

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!



## Second Practice Activity:

Now, we are going to attempt the same process, but instead of saying “shh” we are going to sing a note.

Since we have been breathing in with an “Oh” vowel, let’s sing with an “Oh” vowel also.

Pick any note you want to sing, but I would recommend singing a note in the upper part of your voice.



## Second Practice Activity:

Following the same process, breathe in over 4 counts as you make an “Oh” vowel shape in your mouth.

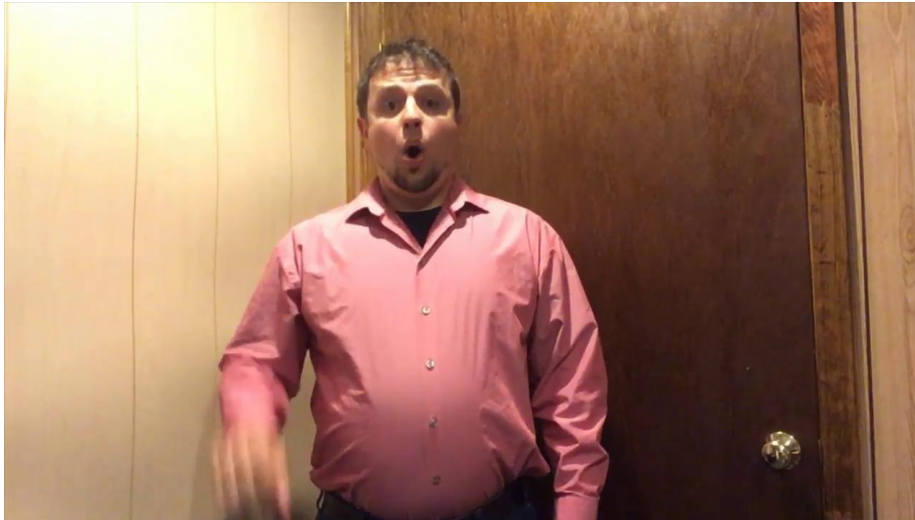
Then, sing “Oh” for 8 counts. You may find it easier to get started by adding a small “h” at the beginning of your sound.

Once you have counted to 8, you can release your air and breath again.



# Second Practice Activity:

Here is what that should look like:





## Second Practice Activity:

As before, once you have done that successfully, try adding more challenge by lengthening the time you sing.

Count to 12, then 16, and then 20. If you can go even longer, good for you!

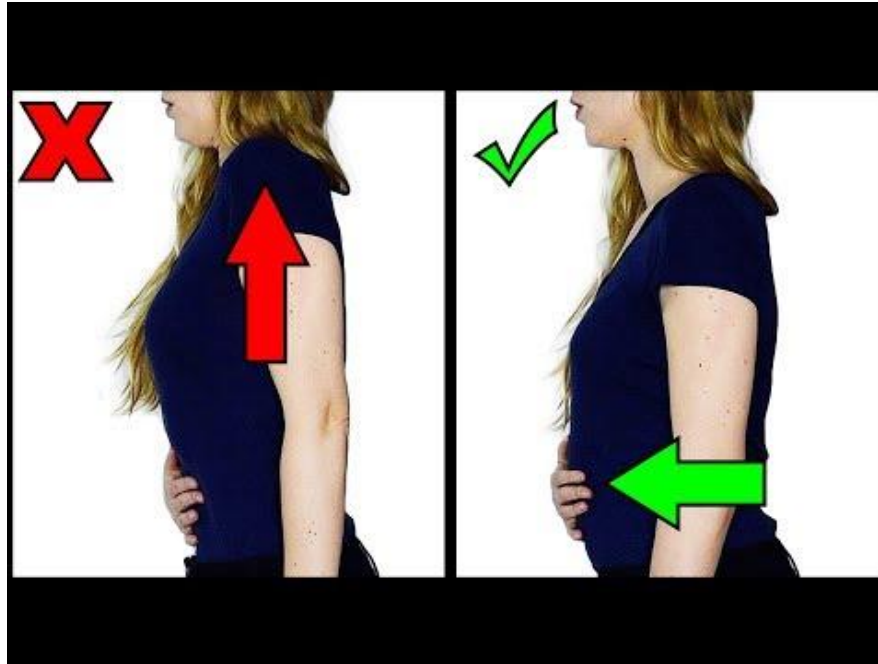
Just make sure that the whole time you are paying attention to keeping your ribs and tummy muscles open.



## Follow-Up Online Activities:

There are a lot of great resources on YouTube to help singers work on proper breathing. Now that you understand the basics, here are a few to guide you in more practice!

# Follow-Up Online Activities:



# Follow-Up Online Activities:



ssssssssssssss

Exhalation  
Technique

# Follow-Up Online Activities:





## Extension Activity for more challenge:

Now, if you want more opportunity to practice your singing, then click on the last video here, where the singers of the professional choir Voces8 lead you in warm-ups, singing exercises, and even teach you a song!

# Extension Activity for more challenge:

