



THE 50 AWESOME CHOIR WARM-UPS *CHEAT SHEET!*

This cheat sheet is for you if:

- You're a new teacher, and looking to create a toolbox of choir warm-ups to work from
- You're a veteran teacher that's tired of using the same old warm-ups and is looking for new ideas
- You're new to conducting a choir and not quite sure about what warm-ups to use or how to use them
- You feel good about your warm-up process, but are looking to supplement what you already do

So much of your success depends on your

Warm-Up Process

- Try to do one warm-up from each category
- Warm-ups should change depending on your objective
- Warm-ups should have a *specific purpose*
- Warm-ups as your main instructional time for vocal technique
- Warm-ups also can be (and should be) influenced by your repertoire
- Have a primary learning objective with each warm-up, but don't ignore secondary objectives

Here are my **Five Main Warm-Up Categories**:

- Breath
- Tone/Vocal Production
- Listening/Intonation
- Vocal Agility/Range Extension
- Physical/Full Body Warm-Ups

Other points of emphasis:

- Vowel Formation
- Blend
- Musicality and Phrasing
- Posture
- Resonance
- FUN!

Quick Tip: When using this Cheat Sheet, make sure you download it to your desktop, and then open the document from there. That way, all of the audio/video links will be “live”, and you can simply click on them to see the examples!

THE WARM-UPS BY SECTION

BREATH WARM-UPS

1-Lip Trills

Musical notation for Lip Trills warm-up. The first staff is in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of ♩ = 90. It contains two lines of eighth-note trills. The second staff starts at measure 6 and continues the trill pattern.

2-Breathe and Hiss

Singers breathe in for 4 counts and hiss for 16, continuing the inspiration phase as they hiss. Singers repeat, increasing the counts with each repetition: 4/20, 4/24, 6/30, 8/36, and 4/40 (this encourages a large, expansive breath, but in a shorter time).

3-Koy-Yah

Singers can use the 'k' consonant as well as the articulation to feel a connection to their breath.

Musical notation for Koy-Yah warm-up. The top staff is labeled 'Voice' and is in 3/8 time. It contains a sequence of notes with lyrics: 'Koy - yah Koy - yah Koy - yah - -ah Koy - yah Koy - yah Koy - yah -'. The bottom staff is labeled 'Pt.' and shows a single note with the lyric '-ah'.

Audio link: bit.ly/KoyYahWarmUp

4-Consonant Crazyiness

Use a combination of unvoiced consonants: P, K, Ch, T, TS, F, S, Sh. Divide your choir up into as many groups as you like, and give each section one of the consonants. Have them say their consonant, but have each group use a different rhythm—half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes,

then exhale on a hiss. Their hands slowly come up, just like an elevator. The idea is that they are continuing the feeling of suspension while they hiss.

Video link: bit.ly/AirElevator

9-Dive Up

Singers start with their arms straight up with their hands together. They inhale in this position, and then exhale with a hiss. As they hiss, their arms come down to their sides. The goal is to keep the rib cage in this expanded, lifted position, and not let it collapse. We want our singers to do the same thing when they sing a phrase!

Video link: bit.ly/DiveUp

10-Power Breaths

Singers start with their arms together straight out in front of them. They inhale for one count, taking in as much air as possible. As they inhale, their arms move out to their sides. Then, students form an [o] with their mouth and exhale ALL of their air in one count. As they exhale, their arms come back in, and their hands press together (noiselessly!).

Video link: bit.ly/PowerBreath

TONE AND VOCAL PRODUCTION WARM-UPS

1-Tee-Eee, Tee-Ay, Tee-Ah

Emphasize articulation to also work on connection to the breath.



Audio link: bit.ly/TeeEeeTeeAy

2-Ni-No-Ni

Ask the singers to bring the open back space of the [o] into the [i] vowel, and to carry the forward focus of the [i] vowel over to the [o] vowel.



Audio link: bit.ly/NiNoNiWarmUp

3-I Sigh to Sing

Singers should strive for a relaxed, open feeling, like the beginning of a yawn.



Audio link: bit.ly/ISighToSing

4-Trill to Vowel

This warm-up starts with an ascending lip trill (Do-Re-Mi-Fa) and then descends on a vowel (So-Fa-Mi-Re-Do). I start with a brighter vowel, like [i], and then move to more open [e] and [a].

5-Nordic Tune

Start this warm-up on a hum, working on a balance of chiaroscuro. Then you can change to different vowels to explore that balance.



Audio link: bit.ly/NordicTune

6-Nee Voo Nee

The 'n' and the 'v' help the singers to keep their sound forward as they sing through the warm-up.

emphasizes accuracy with the onset of tone, balance among sections, and intonation.

Audio link: bit.ly/ChordFun

4-Solfege Round

Great for listening and part independence; you can do it as a round, dividing the choir up by row or by section. For a kinesthetic aspect, throw in some Curwen hand signs!

Musical score for 4-Solfege Round, Soprano part. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of ♩ = 75. The lyrics are: Do Do Re Do Do Re Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa. The score consists of six staves, each starting with a measure number (7, 14, 21, 28, 35) and a vocal line (S.). The lyrics for each staff are: 7: So Fa Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa So La So Fa Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti La So Fa; 14: Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do Ti La So Fa Mi Re Do Do Do Ti Do Do Ti; 21: La Ti Do Do Ti La So La Ti Do Do Ti La So Fa So La Ti Do Do Ti La So Fa Mi; 28: Fa So La Ti Do Do Ti La So Fa Mi Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do Do Ti La So Fa Mi Re Do; 35: Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do.

Audio link: bit.ly/SolfegeRound

5-Interval Up and Down

Once the ensemble can sing the exercise accurately, you can switch to a neutral syllable, such as [nu].

Musical score for 5-Interval Up and Down, Voice part. The score is in 4/4 time. The lyrics are: do re do ti do do mi do la do do fa do so do do so do fa do. The score consists of two staves, each starting with a measure number (9) and a vocal line (Voice and Pt.). The lyrics for each staff are: 9: do re do ti do do mi do la do do fa do so do do so do fa do; Pt.: do fa do so do do mi do la do do re do ti do.

Audio link: bit.ly/IntervalUpandDown

6-Interval Insanity

Once the ensemble can sing the exercise accurately, you can switch to a neutral syllable, such as [nu].

Musical notation for Interval Insanity exercise. The exercise is in 4/4 time and consists of two parts: Voice and Pt. (Piano). The Voice part has a melody with lyrics: do di do ti do do re do te do do me do la do do mi do le do. The Pt. part has a melody with lyrics: do fa do so do do fi do se do do so do fa do. The key signature has one flat (Bb).

Audio link: bit.ly/IntervalInsanity

7- I Know

Musical notation for I Know exercise. The exercise is in 4/4 time and consists of four parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 75. The lyrics are: I know, I know. The key signature has two flats (Bb, Eb).

Audio link: bit.ly/IKnowWarmUp

8-Slow and Steady

Singing on [nu], the ensemble holds a pitch and over the course of 8 counts, moves up a 1/2 step. The idea is that the movement is steady and consistent over the 8 counts.

Once they have that, have the sopranos and tenors move UP a 1/2 step, and at the same time have the altos/basses move DOWN a 1/2 step.

9-Interval Hopping

For an extra challenge, establish the tonic (Do-Mi-So-Mi-Do) and then start the warm-up on a note OTHER than “Do”. For instance, start on “Re”: Re-Mi-Re-Fa-Re-So, etc.

♩ = 75

Part

8

Pt.

15

Pt.

Audio link: bit.ly/IntervalHopping

10-Chromatic Conundrum

Have the ensemble sing a chromatic scale, up and down, in unison: Do-Di-Re-Ri-Mi-Fa-Fi, etc.

Once the ensemble is able to sing it in unison, do the warm-up with Tenors and Sopranos starting on high “Do” and do a descending scale, and at the same time have Basses and Altos start on low “Do” and do an ascending scale.

♩ = 72

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

8

S.

A.

T.

B.

Audio link: bit.ly/ChromaticConundrum

VOCAL AGILITY/RANGE EXTENSION WARM-UPS

1-Octave Slides

Like a siren, but more specific with pitch. Singing on a [nu] helps keep the throat open and the sound forward.

Audio link: bit.ly/OctaveSlides

2-Vi-Va

Start slowly, and then slowly increase the tempo while maintaining accuracy and articulation with the 8th notes

Part

♩ = 90

Vi Va Vi Va Vi- Va- Vi- Va- ah Vi Va Vi Va

6

Pt. Vi- Va- Vi- Va- ah Vi Va Vi Va Vi- Va-

11

Pt. Vi- Va- Vi- Va- Ah- Ah- ah

Detailed description: This musical exercise is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 90 beats per minute. It consists of three parts. The first part, labeled 'Part', has a melodic line with lyrics 'Vi Va Vi Va Vi- Va- Vi- Va- ah Vi Va Vi Va'. The second part, labeled 'Pt.', starts at measure 6 and has lyrics 'Vi- Va- Vi- Va- ah Vi Va Vi Va Vi- Va-'. The third part, also labeled 'Pt.', starts at measure 11 and has lyrics 'Vi- Va- Vi- Va- Ah- Ah- ah'. The notes are primarily eighth notes, with some quarter notes and a final half note.

Audio link: bit.ly/ViVaViVa

3-Leaky Boat

With each repetition you can gently accelerate the tempo--the boat is sinking, so you have to row faster! ;)

♩ = 90

I Rowed - My- Lit - tle - Lea - ky- Boat - I - Rowed -

5

My Lea - ky Boat

Detailed description: This musical exercise is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 90 beats per minute. It consists of two parts. The first part has a melodic line with lyrics 'I Rowed - My- Lit - tle - Lea - ky- Boat - I - Rowed -'. The second part, labeled '5', has lyrics 'My Lea - ky Boat'. The notes are primarily eighth notes, with some quarter notes and a final half note.

Audio link: bit.ly/TheLeakyBoat

4-Pizza is Great!

Don't let the singers breathe after "great"--crescendo instead, and use the momentum to sing through to the end of the phrase.

Musical notation for the phrase "Pizza is Great!". The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 90. The melody is written on a single staff in treble clef. The lyrics are: "Pi - zza is great can't be - lieve how ma-ny pie - ces that I ate!". A crescendo hairpin is placed under the word "great" and extends through the rest of the phrase.

Audio link: bit.ly/PizzaIsGreat

5-Ya Ha Ha Ha

The short version is great for connecting to the breath. The long version is more of a challenge in regards to agility to range extension.

Short Version:

Musical notation for the short version of "Ya Ha Ha Ha". The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 90. The melody is written on a single staff in treble clef. The lyrics are: "Ya ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha".

Audio link: bit.ly/YaHaHaShort

Long Version:

Musical notation for the long version of "Ya Ha Ha Ha". The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 90. It consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled "Part" and the bottom staff is labeled "Pt.". The lyrics for the top staff are: "Ya Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha-". The bottom staff continues the melody with a sixteenth rest at the beginning of the first measure.

Audio link: bit.ly/YaHaHaHaLong

6-Dee Dee Do

A very versatile warm-up; keep it all on one breath and think of it as one long phrase.

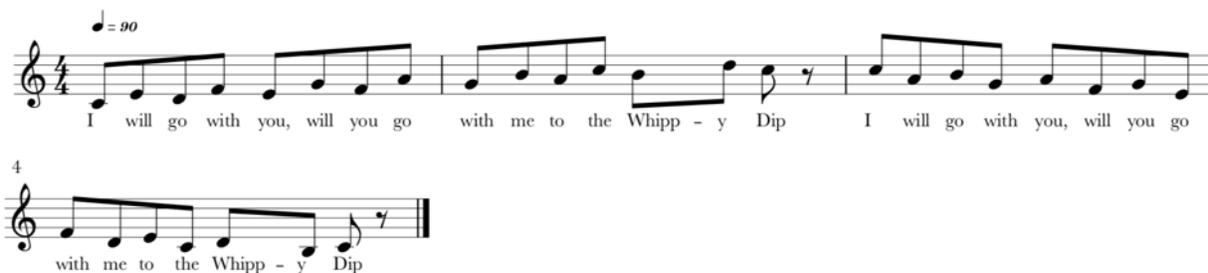


Audio link: bit.ly/DeeDeeDoh

7-Whippy Dip

The “Whippy Dip” is an ice cream shop in Decorah, Iowa (home of Luther College). On the way back down, tenors and sopranos can pop up a third and sing harmony.

For fun, change the destination with each repetition: Dairy Queen, Pizza Ranch, grocery store, library, etc.



Audio link: bit.ly/WhippyDip

8-Sing EE-AY-AH

Another very versatile warm-up: breath, vowel formation, agility, phrasing all included.



9-Back and Forth

This is a warm-up that I created to include more change of direction and downward motion at the beginning of the phrase. Make them work by thinking of it as having 4 measure phrases.

3-Tractor Pull

Singers stand a couple of feet apart, reaching out their right hand to their partner and join hands. Singing “1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1”, they lean away from each other going up to 5, and then, using their core, pull back to upright as they sing back down to 1. The resistance of the pulling sensation between the singers should mimic the feeling of singing through the phrase.

Video link: bit.ly/TractorPullWarmUp



4-Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes

You know what to do. To spice it up, do it *backwards!*

5-Stretch and Pat Down

Following stretching, we will sometimes do a “pat down”; singers start at the top of their body and pat themselves down, all the way to their toes. Finish up with face/jaw massage to help release any tension.

6-20 Seconds to Loose

Singers start in a tall, regal singing stance. As you count slowly from 1 to 20, singers should imagine that a drop of anesthesia has been dropped on their head, and with each count, is making its way down their spine. By the time they get to 20, they should be slumped all the way over, head and arms hanging towards the floor.

Wait a couple moments, and then count to 20 again; this time they slowly roll back up into standing position. When you get to 20, have the singers give a couple more backwards shoulder rolls, just to make sure they are free of tension.

Video link: bit.ly/20SecondsToLoose

10-Stir the Pot



Video link: bit.ly/StirThePot

BONUS WARM-UPS

BONUS #1: THE SUPERMAN

Singers strike their best “Superman” pose (tall posture, hands on hips). The exercise consists of five vowels: [i-e-a-o-u]. The singers will chant each vowel 8 times, leaning a different direction with each vowel: “i” is forward, “e” is to their right, “a” is lean back, “o” is to their left, and then “u” is in the center.

After they do each vowel 8 times, they repeat the cycle doing each vowel 4 times, then 2, and then one, getting faster as they go.

Video link: bit.ly/SupermanWarmUp

BONUS #2: O IS VERY USEFUL



Audio link: bit.ly/OisVeryUseful

BONUS #3: DYNAMIC DESTINATION

This is a warm-up that I saw Tim Seelig do at an ACDA workshop. Super fun!

For this warm-up, the choir sings a chord on [a]: Bass-Do, Tenor-So, Alto-Mi, Soprano-Do.

This warm-up uses the numbers 1-8, 1 being the softest they can sing, and 8 being the loudest. The choir starts the chord at 1, and then moves a number at a time up to 8 and then back down to 1. You can then “jump around”, and see if they can approximate the dynamic level. Do this one enough, and in mid-rehearsal, instead of singing at a “mf”, you can say, “sing this at a 6”, etc.

Video link: bit.ly/DynamicDestination

BONUS #4: SIGH ON PITCH

Using sighs is a great way to teach a relaxed, open throat and lifted soft palate. This warm-up simply adds pitch to a sigh! It's less important how it sounds, and more important that singers strive to sing with the feeling of a sigh.

This warm-up starts in the upper range and descends from there, also making it a great warm-up to work on transitioning vocal registers.



BONUS #5: CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE!

One great way to incorporate and reinforce current repertoire is to create warm-ups that let the ensemble practice challenging excerpts/concepts in your repertoire.

A few years ago my choir was singing “Alles, was O dem hat”, from Bach’s “Singet dem Herrn”. The choir was having difficulty with some of the melismatic passages, so we started practicing a bit of it as a warm-up. Within a couple of days, they had it!



RESOURCES LIST

Building Beautiful Voices: Paul Nesheim and Weston Noble

bit.ly/BuildingBeautifulVoices

The Perfect Blend: Timothy Seelig

bit.ly/ThePerfectBlendWarmups

Choral Singing Step By Step: James Jordan

bit.ly/ChoralSingingStepByStep

The Breathing Gym: Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan

bit.ly/TheBreathingGym

Intonation Choral Exercises

www.graphitepublishing.com/product/intonation/

The Choral Warm-Up Collection

bit.ly/ChoralWarmupCollection

Educating Young Singers: Mary Goetze, Angela Broecker, Ruth Boshkoff

bit.ly/EducatingYoungSingers