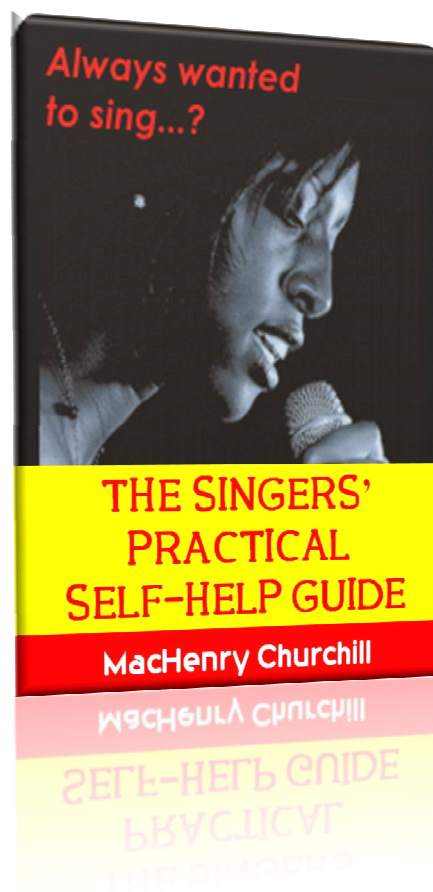


The Singer's Practical Self-Help Guide



MacHenry Churchill

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MacHenry Czar-CHURCHILL

MacHenry Czar-Churchill is a polymath. Gifted in many different directions, he is a creative artiste - a writer, poet, lyricist, talker, singer, songwriter, guitarist and music producer. He writes copy, designs development courses & curriculums, paints portraits, evolves product/service ideas and develops content for all types of media.

He is also a voice-over artiste, MC/compere, actor, model, photographer and radio presenter. He is skilled in strategic thinking, imaginative marketing, persuasive selling and negotiating.

A graduate of **Political Science** from **the University of Calabar** with close to 10 years work experience in daring and uncommon capacities, **MacHenry Czar-Churchill** has grown thick muscles as a Motivator, Life Coach, Business Development Strategist, Nation-BUILDER and Social/Impact Entrepreneur.

He started working in TV as a presenter by age 15 and started his career as a model by age 16. By age 17 he entered the university where he started an events management business, working as a show organizer, mc/compere and musician. He was Logistics Manager for an Events Management company by age 18 and participated in hosting Drama Competitions and Beauty Pageants across secondary schools in Lagos. By age 21 he graduated from the university and started a Publishing business, a Music School and a Stage Drama Production company.

Trained as a Political Scientist, Journalist, Broadcaster, Musician, Fashion Model, Actor and Talent Coach, **MacHenry Czar-Churchill** is a full time entrepreneur, running several businesses. As a Talent Manager, he constantly works with companies, groups, creative artistes and one-on-one with individuals who are ready to 'Raise the Bar' & 'Shift Gears' in their career, life and performance.

He hosts a monthly, open personal empowerment meeting tagged **SURVIVAL STRATEGIES** to help people find solutions to their most pressing challenges in daily living.

He presents two weekly live radio programs themed **LADDER TO SUCCESS & WINDOW ON THE WORLD** on UNILAG 103.1 fm.

He is a prolific writer and online publisher with more than **30 blogs** to his credit.

INTRODUCTION

Can YOU Sing?

To find out if you are a good singer, take time to do the following steps.

You will need:

- A Tape Recorder and Microphone.
- Writing Materials.

Record yourself singing along to a song.

Listen back to your recording.

Take notes on the following points:

Are you in Tune with the music? - your notes should match the song.

Is your voice weak or strong? - shouting is NOT Singing!!

Are you breathing correctly? - you should not be short of breath

Do you struggle to reach the notes - pick an easy song to start with!

Are you gasping for air between phrases - learn to breath in the "rests" between phrases

Record yourself again with another song.

Listen to the difference in your practice recordings as you progress.

Singing With Confidence

Feel too nervous to get up and have a go? - you are not alone - many professional singers suffer with nerves before they sing live!!! Want to sing with confidence? Try the following tips!!

1. The most difficult part is getting up to sing in front of an audience for the first time - once you have achieved this it will become easier each time you perform!!
2. Karaoke and jam nights are great for gaining confidence! No-one cares if you forget the words or mess up the songs so you can relax, have fun and get used to singing in front of an audience.

3. Ask a friend or group of friends to get up and sing with you - pick a song that you can have a laugh with!
4. Don't worry about making a fool of yourself or how you sound - just have a go!
5. Choose a song you know really well - avoid tunes that are difficult to sing until you are more confident about your voice and performing in front of an audience.
6. Take a deep breath, exhale, look ahead and smile as you take the stage - even if you feel terrified this will help you look confident.
7. As soon as you get on stage relax your shoulders and clear your mind of everything except the song you are going to sing.
8. If you are really nervous, concentrate on a point just above the audience's head or if singing karaoke concentrate on the television screen and your singing rather than looking at the audience!
9. If you know the song really well but are still nervous of performing in front of a crowd, then focus on an object slightly above the audience instead of their faces.
10. Find yourself shaking when you are singing? Then move around a bit - swing your hips and bop around - it'll help you to forget your nerves and make you look confident.
11. Got a really awful voice & know it - but still want to have a go? Pick a song that everyone can join in with, a track that is funny or make up funny words, pull faces or use props - you'll sound great & the audience will laugh with you - not at you!!

Diction for Singers

Why is Diction Important?

When the listener hears a song, the words and music create an image, feeling or emotion to which they can relate. When the song is heard repeatedly this creates familiarity and the listener starts to understand the sentiments further, picking up words, even non-sensical ones that encourage participation.

Although both music and lyrics are important, in vocal music it is the text that provides an explanation for the musical accompaniment. If the words cannot be understood, the song can become meaningless.

This is not the case with all forms of compositions. Instrumentals and classical music have their own 'spark' that ignites the listener's imagination, however, in most forms of contemporary music, pop, rock, blues, jazz, soul, rap etc., the words are an integral part that need to be expressed clearly by the singer in order for the sentiment or story to be understood.

Now, I know what you are going to say! There are singers whose vocals are barely understood or mixed low in the track and in some cases the effect is intentional to fit the type of song that is being performed, but in most cases, the singer needs to pronounce and project the words clearly.

Probably the best example of this is a local live music venue. How many times have you attended a live gig, only to be frustrated that you cannot hear the singer...sometimes that's caused by a lack of professional sound engineering, or a problem with the volume of the band, but often it is caused by the singer slurring or muffling the words due to bad diction.

Listen closely to the majority of singers and bands who attain acclaim within their field of music, the one connecting factor is the ability to distinguish the lyrics. The words that form the story or identifying feeling of the song can be understood, even if the call backs, shouts and odd screeches cannot.

They are successful not just for the quality of their music, but also because they recognise that their fans want to understand the song and it is the singer's job to make it look and sound as easy as possible.

Another important aspect of practicing pronunciation is the way the shape of the mouth and placement of the tongue for each vowel and consonant effects the tone and brightness of the notes produced. Learning how to manipulate these shapes and positions in conjunction with correct breath control can aid in improving tone, range and clarity. Part of developing a good vocal technique involves improving vowel and consonant production, so sound those E's & T's!

Exercises for Singers

Breathing

One of the cornerstones of learning to sing is knowing how to breathe correctly and learning to control your breathing so that it is used to optimum effect when you sing.

When we are born our breathing is naturally correct, babies can breathe, yell and scream with optimum effect because they use their lungs without conscious thought. As we grow older, some people become lazy in their habits only using the upper part of the lungs, taking a shallow breath instead of a normal one.

To understand how correct breathing and breath control works, first you need to understand the process that it uses to operate.

Surrounding your lungs is a muscle system called the diaphragm which is attached

to the lower ribs on the sides, bottom and to the back acting as an inhalation device. When you breathe in the muscle lowers displacing the stomach and intestines. When you breathe out the diaphragm helps to manage the muscles around the lungs (abdominal muscles) control how quickly the breath is exhaled.

If you breathe out quickly, the diaphragm does nothing but when you breathe out very slowly the diaphragm resists the action of the abdominal muscles. A singer learns to use this muscle system to control the breath as it is being exhaled.

Hold a finger close to your lips and breathe out slowly, the breath should be warm and moist and you should notice the action of the diaphragm as you exhale. This is the correct amount of breath used when singing normally. A singer does not need to 'force' or 'push' air through the vocal chords to produce a good strong sound, doing so creates too much pressure against the chords, preventing them from operating correctly which can cause damage to the voice.

The stomach area should move naturally inward toward the end of the breath, the stomach should not be 'sucked in' as it prevents the diaphragm from working effectively. Instead the abdominal area should remain expanded to the level it was when you inhaled and allowed to gradually decrease naturally at the end of the breath.

This is where the 'control' comes into play - the singer expands the lungs by inhaling and 'controls' the amount of air expelled when singing a note by allowing the muscle support system to remain expanded - this doesn't mean the stomach is pushed out, rather that it is blown up like a balloon when the air goes in and the singer slows down the natural rate at which it goes down. In most people the breathing is shallow and only the top half of the lungs are used - breathing correctly uses the whole of the lungs so that more air is available, the singer then uses the natural action of the muscles (diaphragm and abdominals) surrounding the lungs to control the amount of air that is exhaled when singing a note.

Good breath support during singing and speech requires, good posture, abdominal breathing and breathing during natural pauses. Breathing and correct support does not require great physical strength - although having toned abdominal muscles helps, even a child can learn how to breath and support their voice correctly. Remember...the diaphragm doesn't exhale for you - just helps to control the amount of air exhaled.

Breathing Exercises

The following exercise may make you feel tired at first, do keep at it as you will begin to notice that it takes less effort to breathe, less energy is used when breathing plus it helps you learn to co-ordinate the diaphragm and abdominal muscles when breathing.

To find out if you are **breathing correctly**, place a hand on your belly button. This area should expand first when you breathe in and then spread upwards until your chest is expanded (don't lift the shoulders or push the stomach out). If you feel you are not breathing properly, practice the following exercise:

1. Lay flat on your back.
2. Place your hands on your waist, fingers pointing towards your belly button.
3. Focus on filling up your stomach from the bottom to the top taking a slow deep breath. (The aim is not to fill yourself to bursting but to inhale enough air so that you can feel the difference between a shallow breath taken when breathing from the chest).

You should feel your stomach rise and your hands being raised gently up and outward until you feel your chest expanding. The expansion is not only at the front of the body but also to the sides and back as well.

4. Breathe out slowly to a count of 5

5. Repeat the exercise 10 times

Practice daily before you rise in the morning and prior to sleeping at night for 5 - 10 minutes gradually increasing this to 3 or 4 times a day.

Once you get it right, practice as often as possible, sitting, standing and whilst at work until you are breathing naturally from your abdomen.

Try the following exercise to help **increase breath control**:

6. Count on one breath singing each number out loud, using one breath at any comfortable pitch. Start with a small number like 5 or 10 and increase this gradually until you can manage 25 or more without straining, tensing or running out of breath.

Posture Exercises

Posture and movement for singers are an integral part of any tutors teaching. Part of being able to sing well includes the ability to be aware of your body, identify and correct problems that arise due to incorrect posture. This is where a singing teacher becomes essential as they can observe your movements during singing and provide you with immediate corrective advice.

This does not mean that your posture needs to be perfect!

Standing naturally ensuring the head, neck and shoulders are relaxed is the correct posture for singing.

Whilst most people do this automatically, there are others whose posture has become lazy, or who have developed bad habits that can inhibit their singing which is why we've provided some guidelines, do's and don't's and exercises to help improve your posture.

Please Note:- This does not mean that you will not be a singer if your posture is less than perfect or that if you suffer with a disability that you cannot sing. **Posture is not a substitute for vocal talent**, just a means of improving your control and providing your voice with optimum conditions for reaching its potential.

Posture Do's and Dont's

Do.....

- Be relaxed and natural
- Keep your movements fluid
- Keep your chin level
- Keep your knees loose
- Keep your head up
- Keep your shoulders sloping and relaxed
- Keep your toes pointed forward with your weight on heels and soles
- Keep the front of your neck loose - don't stretch it
- Keep abdominal muscles relaxed
- Keep your back muscles relaxed
- Smile!

Don't.....

- Drop or hunch your shoulders
- Move stiffly or jerkily
- Drop or tuck in your chin when trying to sing low notes
- Stretch your head upward when trying to sing high notes
- Strain or push your abdominal muscles

Exercises for Improving Posture

The exercises below are used by schools and department teachers to help models, actors and singers achieve correct posture. This age old practice has been used for years and is designed to help you become more aware of how your body works, therefore enabling you to move fluidly and correct mistakes as you feel them happening. **Take them at your own pace. Master one exercise before moving on to the next. Don't rush or try to do too much in one day.**

Please Note: Whilst the following exercises are easy and safe to do people with disabilities, back pain or any physical disorders should consult a physician before attempting any form of exercise.

For these exercises you will need:

A long mirror (preferably full length)
A largish book of medium weight
Wear comfy loose clothing
Wear flat shoes, trainers or bare feet.
A flat long surface i.e., hallway or enough room to walk several paces.
A friend who can observe and make constructive comments & notes.
Patience & a good sense of humour!

All movements should be fluid and breathing natural.

1. Place the mirror in a position at the end of the hallway or room where you can see the whole of (or at the least the top half) of your body.
2. Stand facing the mirror. Study how you stand and compare with the Do's and Dont's above and make adjustments to your posture if necessary.
3. Stand at the end of the walk space and walk naturally towards the mirror observing your movements and posture as you walk. Compare with the Do's and Dont's above and make adjustments to your posture if necessary.

When walking your weight should be mainly on the balls of your feet, so your heels just lightly touch the floor, with the majority of movement from the hips and legs. The upper body should remain straight, relaxed and not 'swing' from side to side.

Even if it seems that you are standing and moving with the correct posture it is difficult without an impartial, experienced observer who will notice bad habits that may appear normal to you.

The following exercises will not work if your posture is incorrect!! 5 to 10 minutes practice a day will help you to achieve better posture, the ideal is to reach a point whereby your posture and movements become automatic and unconscious.

Exercise 1

Place the book centrally on the top of your head.

Turn your head slowly to the left, return to center then repeat the exercises turning your head to the right. The head movements should be smooth with eyes ahead, chin level, head, neck and shoulders relaxed. If the exercise is done correctly the book will remain in place. Tense up, drop the jaw or move jerkily & the book will fall! Repeat this exercise until you can do it several times without the book falling off.

Exercise 2

Stand at the end of the walk space and place the book centrally on the top of your head.

Walk normally towards the mirror, observing your posture as you walk. If your posture is correct and your movements are smooth then the book will remain in place - if not it will fall! Repeat this exercise until you can walk the length of the space without the book falling.

Exercise 3

Stand at the end of the walk space and place the book centrally on the top of your head.

Walk normally towards the end of the walkspace, turn and walk back towards the starting point. If your posture is correct and your movements are smooth then the book will remain in place - if not it will fall! Repeat this exercise until you can do the exercise without the book falling.

Vocal Singing Exercises & Scales

When you have mastered your [breathing](#), the following free singing exercises will help you on the path to improving and understanding your voice.

The key to a good rehearsal is to ensure that you achieve the following before starting:

- Abdominal breathing
- Good posture
- Breath during natural pauses
- Keep your chin level
- Keep your knees loose

Keep your head up
Keep your shoulders sloping and relaxed
Keep your toes pointed forward with your weight on heels and soles
Keep the front of your neck loose - don't stretch it
Keep abdominal muscles relaxed
Keep your back muscles relaxed
Avoid holding your shoulders lifted and puffed out
Relax and SMILE.

If your having a bad day or feel tense and stressed, this can affect your practices and performance. To help achieve consistency do a few [Relaxation Exercises](#) before your rehearsal. If it all starts going horribly wrong, take a break, relax or do something else and try again later.

1. Stand with your shoulders relaxed, arms by your side.
2. Breath in slowly.
3. Sing one note, holding the note for as long as you can without becoming short of breath.
4. Do NOT suck in your stomach!
5. Repeat the exercise with different notes using doh, ray, me, far, so, la, te, doh.
6. Use different mouth shapes and vowels like "ooh", "ee", "a" and "aah"
7. Try singing up and down a scale (called an arpeggio).
8. Sing short notes (known as Staccato) as well as long ones.
9. Sing phrases to improve diction: Examples:

'I really love to sing' (going up the scale)

'Do, re, me, fa, so, la, te, do'

'La, Lo, Le, Lo'

'Ma, Mo, Me, Mo'

'Ta, To, Te, To'

'Hi, He, Ha, Ho, Hu'

'Qua, Quo, Que, Quo'

'Fluffy Floppy Puppy'

'Lolli, lolli, lolli, lolli pop'

'Bring back the boys big brown blue baseball bats'

'Sally saw silvester stacking silver saucers side by side'

(c-e-d-f-e-g-f-a-g-b-a-c--b-d-c up the scale then down the opposite way)

10. To feel the difference between raised and normal positioning of the larynx, place your fingers gently on your throat and try to talk as if you were a child or use 'baby talk'.

11. Record your efforts, notice the notes that do not sound right and concentrate on those until they do! Listen to the difference in your recordings over the next few weeks practice sessions to hear the improvement in your voice.

Vocal Techniques

IMITATING PROFESSIONAL SINGERS OR FAVOURITE SINGERS

Every Singer has their own unique style, sound and tone which is worth studying. Watching and listening to the way a professional singer performs provides an insight into the techniques used, but you could spend years trying to emulate the top vocalists or favourite artist. **If you intend to be a "tribute" act or have a natural similarity to an existing artist, studying them will be an essential part of your rehearsal program, but to really benefit from your voice, you should concentrate on developing your own natural vocal abilities and style.**

If you listen to a vocal line, you will see how rare it is to hear a "monotone" or one note singer. When you speak, your voice lifts and drops, increases and decreases in volume, this is referred to as 'LIGHT & SHADE' or 'EXPRESSION' and is the key to making an average song into a highly listenable one. So how do you achieve the same effect in your vocal performance?

The answer is to learn about how sounds and shapes are created then integrate this with natural feeling and emotion. Part of a singing teachers job is to provide the student with exercises and techniques plus identify tensions to aid the singer in exploring their own potential and singing in a healthy manner.

This can sound a little intimidating or confusing to the complete beginner, who may not understand the meaning behind the terminology or reason for the exercises used. [Vocal Scales](#), learning to [breathe](#), [rhythm](#), dynamics, timbre, correct [diction](#), phrasing and visualisation are methods that teach the singer about the mechanism of singing.

There are times when singers try too hard to do it right instead of expressing the song. Singing without considering technique or style during a practice session can release tension, resulting in the subconscious use of correct technique, thereby producing a beautiful tone or emotive quality. Technique is just a means to an end that is forever open, it grows, changes and develops as the singer gains experience and confidence in their own ability.

SIMPLE TIPS

The following tips and exercises should be tried once, they are not 'healthy techniques' to be used on a constant basis, just one off ideas aimed at the exploration of how it feels when using mouth shapes and sounds.

1. Soften your voice to almost a whisper to give it a 'breathy' feel.
2. Practice a cats 'miaow' and 'growl' sound (no really), try it and use the mouth/sound shape to give yourself a sexy 'growl'.
3. Experiment with tongue placement, mouth shapes, raising and lowering the larynx when singing a note or phrase.

Visualise the notes hitting the ceiling to get those high notes and the floor to get the low ones.

Here are a few exercises you can practice to help achieve light and shade in your voice.

1. Use a phrase to practice with - try using - "I want to WHISPER" "I want to SHOUT",
2. Begin by speaking the phrase normally, record your efforts and listen to your pronunciation and expression.
3. Repeat the phrase 'whispering' the first section and 'shouting' the second.

By now you should feel, and hear the way your mouth, throat and breathing create the different sounds.

4. Now 'SING' the whole phrase normally, be relaxed and natural.
5. Finally redo the whole exercise 'singing' the phrase.

Try to 'project' your voice forwards and outwards by visualising the note reaching the back of the room.

The tune or notes you use are not important, but taking note of how you sound during the exercise is.

Once you have tried these ideas, you should be able to identify the shape of the mouth and position of the tongue that helps to create the sound and tone, which if used correctly can be applied to the songs you perform to create different effects to phrases and words. The aim is to discover methods that feel comfortable, sound good and enable the voice to operate at peak efficiency, if a method causes hoarseness or hurts, then it follows that it causes stress to the vocal chords which could be damaging to the voice.

EXPRESSION

This is the term used to explain 'feeling' in your voice. Putting expression into a song makes it 'come alive' for the listener.

When you read the lyrics of a song, do they come alive for you? Can you relate to the theme or story? Speak the lyrics aloud, imagine you are talking to a close friend, how would you say the words to them? If it is a love song or ballad, envisage the person you would like to express those emotions to.

Breathing in the right 'gaps' or 'rests' is important as it helps you to hit the right note and put expression into the performance.

A bright, confident sound in your voice can be achieved by smiling!

This can be applied to any song with a strong emotional theme, the key is to relate to what the songwriter is trying to express and using your natural emotions to enhance the way you perform the song. Sing it from the heart and you won't go far wrong.

Singing Tips Designed To Help You Sing Better!

Singing tips no 1

Learn how to **extend your vocal range**. This is an important factor in developing a great singing voice. It will give your voice another dimension, and add an element of excitement to your singing.

Extending vocal range is done by learning how to sing in different vocal registers... different muscle coordinations. You must learn how to zip up your vocal chords as you sing higher. This leaves less of the vocal chords free to vibrate, and allows you to easily hit high notes.

Singing tips no. 2

The second important factor in increasing your vocal range, is to **blend your vocal resonances**. Your tone will resonate in your throat, your mouth, and your nasal cavities.

Each one of these cavities will favor different frequencies... produce a different sound. To develop beautiful tone, you must balance these vocal resonances. Once balanced, **your tone will be superb**.

As you move through the different areas of your voice (low, middle, and high), the resonance will undergo changes. For example, when you are singing low notes, most of the resonance will be felt in the throat and mouth.

As you pass up through your range, you will feel the resonance pass behind the soft palate (the soft tissue that acts as a divider of your mouth and nasal cavity), and into your nasal cavities.

When you are singing in your highest range, most of the resonance is felt in your head (nasal cavity).

Singing tips no. 3

The change of resonance described in tip no. 2, are defined by many vocal instructors as vocal registers.

To develop a great voice you must become intimate with each of the three main vocal registers. Here they are....

Chest voice - The voice we generally speak in. The vocal chords vibrate across their entire length, and the resonance is primarily in the throat and mouth. Chest voice produces a thick, rich, vocal sound.

Head voice - This is the highest part of our usable range. The vocal chords are in a shortened or "zipped up" coordination, and the resonance is primarily in the nasal or head cavity. Head voice produces a slightly hooty sound, like when you impersonate an owl "hooting"!

Mixed voice - This is a commercial sounding voice that is higher in pitch than the chest voice. It is the voice you hear most top 40 artists using on the radio. It uses a "zipped up" chord coordination, although it gives you the same impression as singing in chest voice, with sweeter tone quality.

The resonance is split in this coordination, half in the mouth and half in the head cavity. For commercial success, learning to sing in the mixed voice is a must.

Singing tips no. 4

Work hard at developing your mixed voice! This is one of the hardest vocal coordinations to master, although is very achievable with the correct training. This part of your voice is what ties your entire voice together.

It is the bridge between your chest and your head voice. It is also the best part of your voice to use for a commercial, popular sound. It will give your voice flexibility and will actually improve the other areas of your voice!

Your chest and head voice will likely improve once you master your mixed voice. This is because the mixed voice requires the most sophisticated resonance and vocal chord coordination.

The chances are, if your mixed voice is beginning to sound really good, your vocal chords and breathing are beginning to function very efficiently, and your voice will only get better and better!

A great mixed voice is a sign of a good singer! So work on blending those registers....

Singing tips no. 5

Ok, here's an obvious one....

Warm up **before** doing any vigorous singing exercises! I know it's tempting to get straight into it....

Warming up your voice will increase the blood flow to your vocal chords. The muscles will then find it *so much* easier to operate effectively. You will be able to sing much better, with much less vocal tension.

It's so simple, yet so many singers forget to warm up.

Begin by humming nice and relaxed, in a easy range. Use simple scales, and don't try and sing too high, too early!

After humming for a few minutes, continue warming up by doing some lips rolls on a slightly harder scale. After ten minutes of this, your vocal chords should be nice and flexible, ready for some more challenging exercises!

Don't forget to warm up. Your voice will thank you for it.

Singing tips no. 6

Just as it is important to warm up before singing, you must warm down after singing. This will prevent your voice from getting tight, and it will make it easier next time you sing.

Do a gentle slide from your highest, easily reached note, down to your lowest note, and then into vocal fry (Vocal fry is the first noise you make when you wake up!

It sounds like Elma Fudd...."Hewo" in his crackly vocal fry!). If you still don't know what vocal fry is, stop the exercise when you get to your lowest note.

Do this exercise 10 to 15 times after every practise session. Keep it very relaxed... It will reinforce the progress you had made in that lesson. This is one of the most overlooked of the singing tips...

...Don't forget it!

Singing tips no. 7

Be sure not to forget singing tips no. 6!



When it comes to singing, most of us do not really observe good **voice care** measures on a daily basis. In fact, we would not give a second thought to eating certain foods or taking alcohol or caffeinated drinks just before we sing!

In fact, there are many important voice care tips that we can learn, so that we can maintain a healthy and strong singing voice, as well as not do too much damage to our fragile vocals!

These tips range from [which foods we can or should eat](#) for a good singing voice, as well as [which foods we should avoid](#) in order to take proper care of our voices. There are also [various voice protection tips and techniques](#) that we can follow in order to ensure proper vocal health.

Many of us would probably know some of the general guidelines that we can follow to take care of our voice:

1. Maintain Good Posture and Proper Breathing Control When Singing

- Always make sure that we maintain an upright and neutral posture and practise proper breath support when we sing! Practise these [basic breathing exercises](#) in order to establish **better breath control** in our singing. If we wish to, there are also other more [advanced breathing exercises](#) that we can practise in order to be more proficient in our breathing control!

2. Practise Vocal Warmups Before We Sing

- We should always be sure to warm up our voices before we start to sing, so that our diaphragm and our vocal cords are ready to support and produce the sound that we require during singing.

There are some useful [vocal warmup exercises](#) we can do in order to achieve better voice care and protect our singing voice.

3. Regular Exercise and Proper Diet

- This point applies to our voice care and also to our bodies in general. Achieving a **good level of personal health** is certainly beneficial to maintaining a great singing voice. This is because when our bodies fall ill, we may feel fatigue, experience blocked noses, sore throats or may not even practise proper vocal technique when singing. This will cause unnecessary damage to our voices, and we would do well to keep ourselves healthy so that our voices will be healthy too!

4. Keep Our Neck, Jaw and Face Relaxed During Singing

- When we sing, we control our breath using our [diaphragm and the surrounding abdominal and intercostal muscles](#), and our voices with our vocal cords and supporting muscles. We should always take care **not to involve other muscle groups** into the picture, for example our neck muscles, jaw muscles and facial muscles. These muscles should be relaxed when we sing, as they will affect our voice by increasing the amount of tension in our throats and in our vocal cords, and making it more difficult for us to sing well!

5. Placing or Focusing Our Voice Appropriately

- There are a great variety of **vocal registers and positions** that we can sing from, and knowing which register to use as well as which position our voice should resonate from will be beneficial to general voice care and avoiding vocal damage. For example, we would not wish to place a very high note in too low a position, or to use a low register to stretch and reach for a high note! Do check out the rest of this website for more information on vocal registers as well as positions!

6. Reduce Speaking Time in Noisy Environments

- When we are in extremely noisy environments, for example at a busy construction site or at a crowded club or pub, we would find that the overall noise level in these places are far higher than what we usually encounter in our daily lives. As such, when we try to speak in these noisy conditions, we cause a lot of **strain on our voices** and may hurt our vocal cords in the process. Reducing our speaking time in these noisy environments will help to avoid unnecessary damage and aid in protecting our singing voice!

There are also some specific guidelines regarding **usage of medications** that we would do best to bear in mind:

1. Avoid **anti-histamines, decongestants and anti-depressants**. These tend to cause dryness in our voice and make it difficult for us to sing well, as our vocal cords need to be well hydrated and moist in order to function properly.

2. Avoid **over-the-counter local anaesthetic medication for the throat**. These tend to reduce nerve sensitivity in our throat and also create numbness, making our voice more susceptible to damage. In a sense, it is something like driving when we are blindfolded, as we are unable to feel our voice or our throat sensations and we do not know if we abuse our voices or employ too much of our throat muscles to sing!

3. Take **antacids for acid reflux**. Acid reflux causes acidic fluids to flow back up towards our throat and may hurt our throat tissue as well as our vocal cords! Learning to take care of our acid reflux problem will certainly help to keep our voices healthy and free from damage!

These are just some tips on proper **voice care** that we can follow in order to maintain a strong and healthy singing voice!

Certainly, for us to sing better we not only need to know how to protect our voice, we also need to understand the various [common singing problems or habits that we may have](#), as well as how to avoid them! Check below to understand more about our **singing problems** and try to identify your personal singing problem, as well as how you can correct your bad singing habits!

Voice care: warm-up exercises for your voice

How to sound your best

Just as you wouldn't dream of doing a sporting activity without warming up your muscles first, you should try and warm up your vocal muscles. Anyone who sings in a choir or plays in an orchestra knows that you can't just launch into a performance and expect to sound your best. Here are a few suggestions for simple exercises to warm up your voice.

- Give your feet, legs, hands and arms a bit of a shake – release any tension in there.
- Tense up and relax your shoulders twice (you can't rid of all the tension in one go)
- Yawn! Find as much space as you can inside your mouth. Stick your tongue out as far as you can (in private, obviously!)
- [Breathe in deeply](#) using your diaphragm and breathe out on a long 'sss...' sound.
- If you have time and the luxury of a bit of peace and quiet (!), count your in breaths, hold for the same count and exhale on a hissing sound, increasing the number you count each time (start at IN – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4, HOLD – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4, OUT (sss...) – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 and see how far you can get.
- Imagine you are blowing out a candle – use a short out-breath from very low down in your abdomen. Supporting your voice in this way will give you maximum volume and will have least impact on your delicate throat muscles
- Remembering the place where you found the support for the candle, say 'Ha!' several times.
- Make a buzzing sound at the lowest pitch you can find in your voice; see if you can feel the resonance inside your rib cage.
- With your mouth closed, make a very high-pitched humming sound on 'mmm ...' or on the 'ng ...' as in the word 'singing' see how high you can go with this. Feel the resonance in front of your eyes
- Finally, on an 'mmm ...' or 'ng ...' hum see if you can go up and down from a very high to a very low note and back again – like a siren. This one might take a bit of practice.
- Get into the habit of doing this before you start teaching – you'll notice the difference.
- You should drink water throughout the day – don't just use it for first aid. If your vocal cords are lubricated already you won't feel the need to gulp down water in a vocal emergency.