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5 HIGH-IMPACT SINGING TIPS

Advice for gaining confidence in your voice

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introduction

It's often said that the human voice is the best musical instrument on Earth. Yet, even though we're born with this instrument, most people don't sing, and even worse, most people believe that they couldn't do it even if they wanted to.

But consider all the natural things people do with their voices that have nothing to do with singing — they speak, laugh, sob, moan, yell and even scream. And when they really let go, they can do them with confidence, projection and reckless abandon.

The reality is, when we sing, we basically do all these things, there just happens to be music in the background. In fact, singing decently is really just about learning to leverage the things you already do with your voice on a day-to-day basis. Here are five tips for getting the most out of your voice.

tip 1: sing with your speaking voice

Most people's first inclination when they start to sing is to find a "singing" voice in a higher range than their speaking voices. But, the thing is, when you simply talk, you are actually hitting pitches in your baseline singing range, so it makes sense to **make your singing voice as close to your talking voice as possible**.

Try this exercise: using a song you know very well, such as "Mary Had a Little Lamb," speak — not sing — the lyrics a few times. Then, try singing them, but deliberately try to stay as close to your talking voice as possible.

Go back and forth between singing and talking the lyrics to get a feel for the concept. The difference should be subtle. **If you can't find a pitch, search for it by going lower with your voice rather than higher.**

To take this exercise a step further, find a recording of song you know all the words to, and sing along with it by also staying as close to your talking voice as possible.

Don't worry about what the singer in the recording does. Stay focused on the task at hand and let the music that's playing in the background decide the difference between your talking and singing voices. When you get lost, stop and then speak the lyrics until you're ready to sing again. Keep in mind that the better you know the song, the more success you'll have — a pretty good singing tip in its own right.



tip 2: breathe with engaged ab muscles

So much about people's misconceptions about singing revolve around how to breathe. The fact is, **you breathe normally**. The only difference is that when you sing, you need to engage your lower ab muscles by trying to push them out. This will contract them and actually serve to tighten them. As you sing, hold the position as comfortably as possible and breath normally. The deeper you breathe with engaged lower ab muscles, the more you'll feel your hips and glutes working, almost as if air is filling up your entire lower half.

Now, while most singing teachers might have you stand to sing, at first, try breathing with your abs engaged while sitting in a chair with a back. The constraints of the chair will help you feel how your core engages better than standing will. While we're on the subject of standing, eventually, you might find that it has its benefits, but it's really just a matter of preference — good singers sing just as well either way.



tip 3: always keep your mouth open wide

While a human being's default mouth position is typically "closed," while singing, the default mouth position should actually be open in **the same position as when you're about to bite into an apple** almost the entire time.

In fact, the only time your mouth should close is when a consonant, such as the letter "M," forces it to do so. Then, it should snap back to the default, open position immediately.

It's really important to dial into the cue of eating an apple because it helps keep your open mouth in the most ideal setup — always vertical and never spread out like a smile.

Another good cue for staying vertical with your mouth is to raise your eyebrows high and keep them up. This will also help give you the effect of smiling, which works for stage presence.

Projecting your voice upward and outward also helps a lot in keeping your mouth open and set up correctly. This is where confidence really comes into play. If you've put in the work, at a certain point, you simply have to trust your capabilities and commit to what you're singing. That means that even if you're uncomfortable with a song but have had some success in practice, then during a performance, go for it loud and strong from start to finish.

If you give it all you've got, you'll learn more from the experience of doing it when it counts — even if you fail — than if you hold back.



tip 4: stay in pitch by adjusting the way you say certain vowels and consonants

Flat notes, which never sound good, usually come from the way we naturally say certain vowels, consonants and syllables, so singers modify the way they say things to stay in pitch.

Here's how to leverage some of the most common language modifiers that singer's use:

- Sing "ee" while thinking the "ih" sound.
- Sing "uh" while thinking the "ah" sound.
- Sing "eh" while thinking the "ih" sound.
- Sing "ay" while thinking the modified "eh."
- Sing an "r" with an "uh" while thinking "ah." Then at the last moment, kiss it with the actual "r" sound, right before you move on.
- Add a soft "h" sound to "w."
- Add a soft "h" sound to an "l."
- Add a soft "h" sound to any syllable that starts with a vowel. Especially watch out for one-syllable words that sometimes get broken up into two musical syllables, such as using the word, "see," as "see-ee." That "ee" would be considered another syllable and should start with the soft "h" sound.
- When in doubt, try adding either "ah" or a soft "h."

The trick with these modifications is to be subtle about it. You still want the word to come across, you just don't want it to come out flat.



tip 5: enunciate and never mumble

Being deliberate about enunciating your words is going to tie all these tips together. Even if it seems to you like some of the coolest singers mumble, the reality is that music is about communicating a message, and you'll never get yours across if no one understands what you're saying. At the end of the day, a clear singer is a good singer, even if they're otherwise flawed.



bonus tips

Here are a few bonus tips that can also help you gain confidence in your singing.

Get a chromatic tuner (not one that clips onto an instrument.) Uncertainty about whether you're hitting the right pitches is the number one reason for a lack of confidence in your singing. Using a chromatic tuner to check the notes you're unsure about takes out all that uncertainty. It's best to use the tuner for longer notes that you hold rather than short ones, so don't use it for every note in a song — just the important ones. Notes in musical phrases are connected, so if you nail the important one, simply have faith that you've hit the ones that lead up to it, as well.

Make every note count. Often, beginner singers tend to focus too hard on the most important notes and relax too much on the other notes in the phrase. Since every note in the phrase is connected, if you're flat before the important one, you're almost guaranteed to be flat when it counts.

Hold vowel sounds, not consonants. Consonants tend to close your mouth, which doesn't work well for holding out notes. Instead, you want to jump off consonants, which close your mouth, into a vowel hold, which opens it back up quickly. If the end of the hold is a consonant, sound it out quickly at the last possible second. Then, reopen your mouth for the next musical syllable.

Sing as naturally as possible. When starting out with some of the tips in this guide, you'll need to exaggerate them a little so that you can get a good feel for them. But eventually, you want to relax and let them work for you. Being able to sing well comfortably and confidently is the hallmark of a polished singer who has practiced hard while using all these tips as the framework for learning songs. It takes time and even a lot of bad notes, but these tips can help you identify your weaknesses and fix any pitch issues you might come across.

Be you, and don't try to copy anyone else's voice. Your voice is 100% unique, and you should learn to appreciate it in its own right. Sure, other people's voices sound great too, but the reality is that hiding your own voice to try to use someone else's shows an underlying lack of confidence in your own abilities, and since singing is so mental, that lack of confidence will eventually limit the heights you can reach.

But, feel free to steal ideas from the greats. People have been singing for thousands of years, and you don't have to always reinvent the wheel. Sometimes, it's best to hear how someone else sang a song and then try to apply the same principles to your own performance. Considering that your voice is 100% unique, you might find a fresh take on a new song, and who knows — it might change the world.

next steps

If you're interested in exploring these concepts further, working with a voice coach can really help take you to the next level.

Voice training through Approachable Music is unlike any other in that it's specifically geared toward people interested in singing modern, popular music without the classical approach.

We offer online and onsite coaching to improve your singing, so **[click here to read about our voice lessons](#)**.

Approachable Music is on a mission to make learning music more accessible. We use accelerated learning ideals to teach the most important real-world music skills, so people can learn an instrument or improve on the one they're already playing as quickly as possible.

For more information about music lessons, or private workshops and classes specific to your organization, contact us at: **info@approachablemusic.com**

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