



HOW TO WARM UP

AT HOME



First Scenario

You are surrounded by family in your home or are very busy, leaving you without the time and/or a private space to focus solely and confidently on singing.

1. Breathing Exercises

Two common breathing exercises are inhaling into your diaphragm and exhaling on a hiss. To practice this exercise:

- Maintain proper posture and relax your body. Stand up straight and relax your shoulders and chest.
- Slowly breathe in through your mouth for five seconds. As you inhale, bring the air deep into your diaphragm. Your abdomen should expand outward. A controlled breath should not make your chest or shoulders rise.
- Slowly exhale from the same position for five seconds. While exhaling, make a hissing “sss” sound. Also, keep your chest and shoulders relaxed.

Repeat this breathing exercise several times. Try inhaling and exhaling for longer durations to build more lung capacity and control. Trying not to ignore posture, you can do this while washing dishes, watching TV, reading emails, or baking cakes.

2. Humming

Humming is one of the best all-around vocal exercises. This technique helps stretch the vocal cords, relaxes your facial muscles, and improves breathing. Humming also develops your vocal resonance and tone quality. To practice this exercise:

- Relax your facial muscles and body.
- Place the tip of your tongue behind your bottom front teeth.
- Produce a “hmmm” sound with your jaw open and your lips closed.
- Hum notes up and down your range while keeping your mouth closed.

Repeat this exercise several times. Also, try to increase the intensity of the humming vibration each time. The vibrations generated by the hum relaxes your face muscles and relieves tension that can affect your voice.

Second Scenario

You actually have carved out private time in your day (hopefully at least 15 minutes) to specifically work on practicing and vocalizing.

Good job!

1. Sirens or Vocal Sigh

The siren exercise will warm up your range and stretch your vocal cords. This technique also helps you transition through the notes smoothly without cracking. To practice this exercise:

- Make a continuous “ng” or “ooh” syllable sound.
- Start at the lowest note in your vocal range and gradually glide up to the highest note you can reach comfortably.
- Continue holding the “ooh” sound and glide back down to the lowest note you can reach comfortably.
- Repeat several times by gliding up and down your vocal range, like you’re making a siren sound for an emergency vehicle.

This technique should feel smooth and relaxed. Sing at a comfortable level and don’t extend your range. As you practice, work on transitioning through the different vocal registers without cracking. For example, the transition from your chest voice to head voice.

2. Yawning

Yawning will relax your jaw, throat, tongue, and facial muscles. It also helps with breath control. To practice this exercise:

- Open your jaw wide and inhale slowly as if you're yawning.
- Keep your jaw and tongue relaxed at their natural resting points. Also, make sure your chin posture and shoulders remain relaxed as you inhale and exhale.
- Exhale slowly as you close your mouth. Bring your lips together, but keep your teeth apart. The tongue should also lie relaxed, touching the back of the bottom teeth.
- After taking a few good yawning breaths, try humming while exhaling. Produce a "hmm" sound at a comfortable pitch and control your breath as you exhale.
- Relax and repeat as often as needed. Try to extend the duration you hold the pitch each time. Also, practice moving the pitch up and down your range as you continue.

Loosening up your throat and facial muscles with this exercise will reduce possible voice straining. It also increases the oxygen flow to your brain, which will make you more alert.

3. Lip Trills

Lip trills warm up the vocal cords and diaphragm, improves breath control, and reduces tension. The technique involves making a motorboat sound with your lips, causing them to vibrate rapidly. To practice this exercise:

- Relax your lips and cheeks. This step is essential because tight lips will not trill.
- Squish your lips together into a loose pucker. Also, use your index fingers to push your cheeks upwards at the corners of your mouth.
- Inhale through your nose and quickly exhale out your mouth to make your lips vibrate rapidly. Produce a motorboat sound or “brrr” sound.

As you improve, add sound to your lip trill. First, sing short and long notes while trilling. Then, try to produce buzzing melodies. You could also combine lip trills with the siren exercise.

4. Tongue Trills

Tongue trill exercises are similar to lip trills but with your tongue. The technique involves curling your tongue and rolling your “R’s” as you go through your vocal range. To practice this exercise:

- Relax your tongue and place it behind the front upper teeth.
- Inhale through your nose and exhale out your mouth. While exhaling, make your tongue vibrate rapidly like when rolling an “R” syllable or imitating a cat purr.
- Hold the sound steady for several seconds to warm up your tongue and improve breathing.

As your endurance improves, try tongue trills for longer durations. You could also combine this technique with the siren exercise.

5. Vowels

Controlling the shape of your mouth and tone when singing vowels will enhance your voice clarity. This exercise also helps improve the quality of tone, pitch, vowel shape, and breath control.

When forming vowels, it's essential to know the right lip, tongue, and jaw position. Having a controlled mouth position will help you pronounce words with greater clarity and articulation. To practice this exercise:

- Sing through the vowels “**Ah, Eh, Ee, Oh, Ooh**” on the same pitch.
- Practice maintaining a consistent mouth shape to produce them naturally and clearly. Avoid manipulating your mouth, tongue, and jaw to force a vowel sound.
- Next, move up in pitch a half step and sing through the vowels again.
- Repeat the exercise by singing vowels up and down your vocal range. Pay attention to the shape of your mouth and how each vowel opens or closes the throat muscles.

6. Diction

Tongue twister exercises improve vocal articulation and pronunciation. They train your brain and mouth to handle transitions between difficult syllables. Practice repeating short phrases that are difficult to say quickly. As you progress, try repeating them at various pitches.

- Cooks cook cupcakes quickly.
- Pad kid poured curd pulled cod.
- A happy hippo hopped and hiccupped.
- Rory's lawn rake rarely rakes really right - (try this one with a flipped "r")
- Thirty-three thousand feathers on a thrushes throat.
- Sounds abound when the mouth is round
- A synonym for cinnamon is a cinnamon synonym
- A proper cup of coffee from a proper copper coffee pot

You articulate sounds with your lips, tongue, teeth, jaw, and palate. Tongue twisters will stretch out these muscles, reduce tension, and improve the quality of your voice.

The Pitches

It's important to start singing in a lower, very comfortable part of your range and gradually work your way up. Do not try to expand your range at either the bottom or top end right away. After a few minutes of warming up in the most comfortable part of your range, you can move towards expansion.

Singing these pitches of the scale is always a great place to start: 123454321. Repeat those pitches a half step higher upon each repetition. Once you reach your top, head back down toward the low end of your range.

Stretching

Don't forget how important it is to stretch and warm up your body before you sing. While I would encourage you to get your body ready even before practicing hums or simple breathing exercises, it's imperative that you stretch and engage all your muscles before any formal practicing.

Stretch and loosen your neck, shoulders, back, arms, legs, jaw. For example, you could do neck rolls, shoulder rolls, bending over, torso twists, one arm pulled across your body, bouncy knees, and finally, good end in posture.

Singing With a Recording

Vocal Tone: He Eh Oh

Hums, Mums, Arpeggios

Vibrato

Vocal Sustain

Riffs (exercises 1-19 are best)