

Vocal Technique Training for Children

Resources:

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"VoiceCare Network." *VoiceCare Network*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 July 2013. (Graduate level St. John's course: Bodymind and Voice)

Many thanks to:

- **Dr. Jerry Doan.** Professor of Vocal Performance/Pedagogy, ASU Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, School of Music, Tempe AZ. (Graduate level ASU course: Vocal Anatomy and Physiology)
- **Amy Perciballi.** Mezzo-soprano, Voice Teacher and Advisor, Singer in The Phoenix Chorale, Phoenix AZ.

Vocal Warm-ups

From: Jeffery Bauman

- Develop voices.
- See and hear.
- Use warm-ups to address issues.
- Explain and label.
- Model efficient and inefficient.
- Teach singing and refine vocal technique.
- Explain standards.

Goal:

**Send each student
to the next choral experience
a better singer
more understanding of voice
its limits, its full potential**

Warm-ups = group voice lessons

Choose **1 concept** each class.

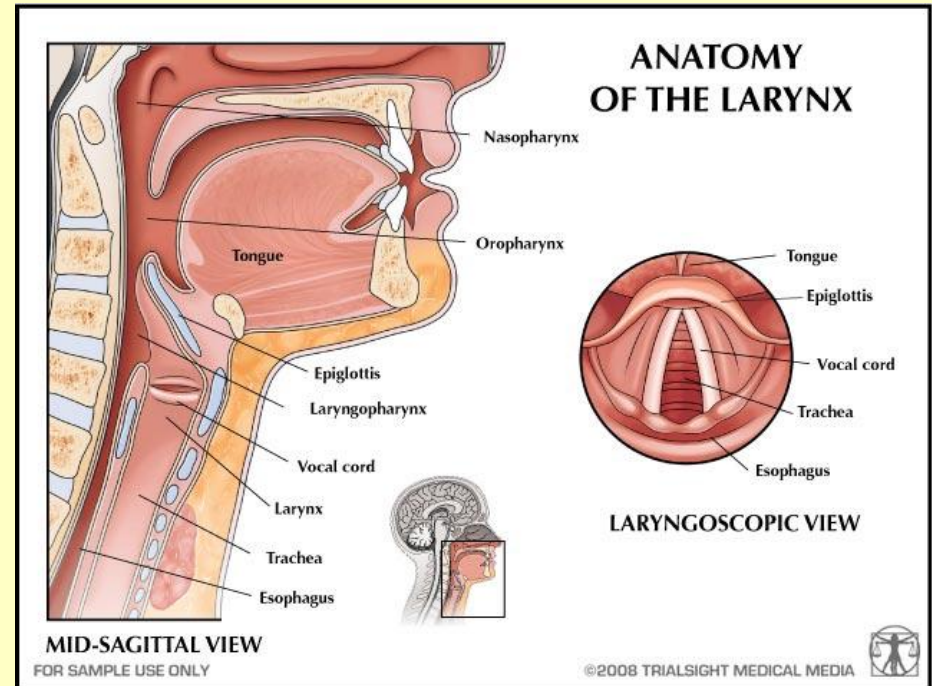
- Warm-ups:
 - Body
 - Release tension
 - Breathing
 - Range
 - Teach, reinforce, and refine vocal technique.
 - Singing across all registers
 - Vowel and consonant shaping

Do warm-ups

Only choose 1 concept to teach each class!

Thumbnail of Voice Anatomy / Function

- Internal muscle groups of Larynx
 - Closer
 - Opener
 - Lengthener
 - Shortener
- Vocal cords
 - Thicker / Thinner
- Breath
 - In: diaphragm et al.
 - Out: abs et al.

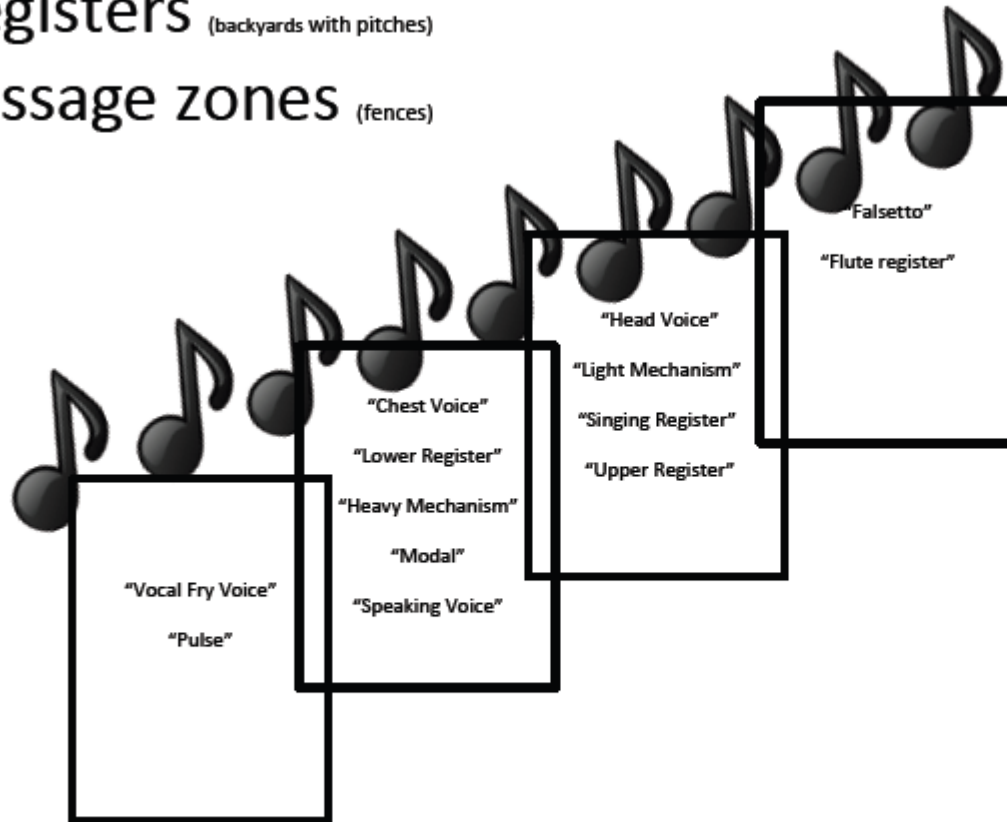


- External muscle groups
 - Neck, under chin

Vocal Registers

Registers (backyards with pitches)

Passage zones (fences)



Outline from:
VoiceCare
Network

Mix

Only shorteners More shorteners More lengtheners Only lengtheners

The Child's Mind

- Children: copy cats
- All children must misunderstand and mis-attempt new ideas and skills.
- Muscles / neural network - VERY strong memory.
 - Stop, notice, explore.
 - Experience choices & explore, correct.
 - Practice new choices to habituate.
 - Takes time!

Use Pitch, Vowel, and Dynamics to Strengthen the Voice

VERTICAL

Created by
Dr. Jerry Doan
ASU
School of Music

	Lengthener muscles	Shortener muscles	Closer muscles
pitch	Use higher pitches	Lower pitches	higher sounds require more adduction
dynamics	Use softer sounds	Louder sounds	louder sounds require more adduction
vowels	<u>h</u> oot and no <u>t</u>	<u>h</u> ey, <u>f</u> ather, ke <u>en</u> <u>w</u> et <u>a</u> t	Open vowels Require more adduction

Use Pitch, Vowel, and Dynamics to Coordinate the Voice

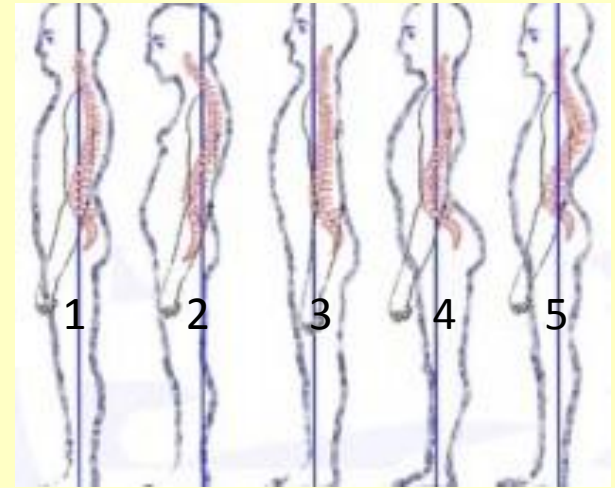
HORIZONTAL

Created by
Dr. Jerry Doan
ASU
School of Music

	Lengthener muscles	Shortener muscles	Closer muscles
pitch	Use higher pitches	Lower pitches	higher sounds require more adduction
dynamics	Use softer sounds	Louder sounds	louder sounds require more adduction
vowels	<u>h</u> oot and <u>n</u> ote	<u>h</u> ey, <u>f</u> ather, <u>k</u> een <u>w</u> et <u>a</u> t	Open vowels Require more adduction

Refine Vocal Technique

BODY ALIGNMENT SUPPORTS SINGING:



1. Floating, buoyant, aligned
lightness, easy alertness
2. Arms straight above head
Bobble head feel; slowly release
arms. Think: head back, up.
Show off gold-star stickers.
3. Ease. Lie on floor on your back. Experience flexibility.
4. Lift and float.
5. Lift and forward. Open shutters. Smell fresh air.

Refine Vocal Technique

Neck and head alignment supports singing

1. Back of neck long; front, short.

Head as balloon

2 Head too heavy!

Ears over shoulders.

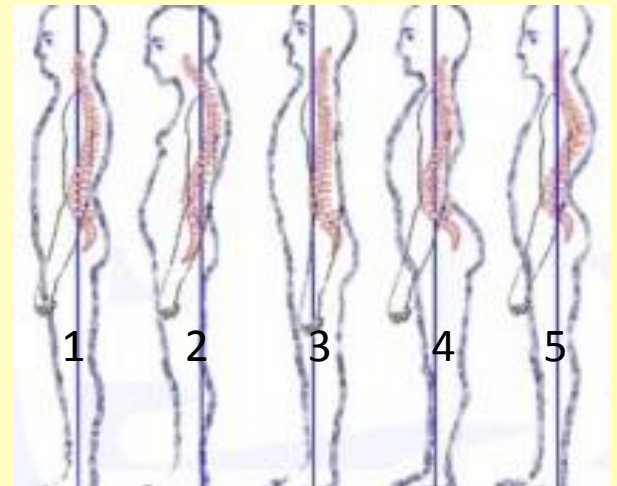
Up, back.

3. Release. Add movement.

Experiment with opposites.

4. Floating, tiptoeing.

5. Turtle. Up, forward. Walk and sing – high swan arms. hands down. Tall and relaxed.



Refine Vocal Technique

Release tension

Shoulders – back and comfortably down.

Neck – balanced place

Head – balanced place

Tongue – wide and flat

Touch bottom front teeth.

Jaw – swinging hinge; down and back.

Marshmallows between back molars.

“Duh” “Kah Kah” Puppet jaw

Refine Vocal Technique

Extending child's full range safely

Children explore then understand.

Why this order?

1. Chest voice — A3 to D4 up to E4 or F4
2. Higher head voice — D5 or C5 down to A4
3. Middle range. — D4 to B4
4. Highest register only when ready. —
D5 on up to A5

Use caution here! Why?

Refine Vocal Technique

Efficient Breath: Air for Singing

Experience:

1. Hands and knees. **Large** breaths.

Notice movement.

2. Breath in: bellybutton releases to floor.

3. Breath out: bellybutton back toward spine.

4. Partner work: hand-over-hand, upper tummy.

Breathe in – hands out. Breathe out – hands in.

5. Bellows

6. Shoulder movement? Work with partner and hands.

Refine Vocal Technique

Efficient Breath: Spaces for Singing

Experience:

1. “Silent breath” shapes throat – release jaw 1st.
2nd fog window. (Ah, U or OH)
 2. Open throat, allow bellybutton to come out; air will automatically come in silently!
 3. Ghost sound allowing tongue, throat, mouth to remain, draw belly button toward back.
- Breathe in vowel before singing.
 - No need to change anything for singing. Just sing.

Refine Vocal Technique

Breathy sound

- Too much air out at once while vocal cords not closed

Suggest:

– leaky tire: F, SH, or S, quiet sounds.
(Developmental skill!)

Don't let them tense throat.

Note: you are asking them to engage their abs, their “support” system.

Refine Vocal Technique

Breathy sound

- Not enough air at onset
- Closer muscles not strong enough for air used.

Suggest:

1. Hum with teeth together. Feel buzz.
2. Keep lips together; open teeth. Keep buzz in roof of mouth by nose.
3. Release jaw to **mee** then **mah**. Imagine buzz still there!

Refine Vocal Technique

Breathy sound

- Not engaged
- Very timid

Suggest:

- Fun! Play!
- Opera singer
- Zooms Vee's
- Sing with plank, standing one foot, or light calisthenics.
- Speak the phrase.
- “The Bicycle”

Refine Vocal Technique

A pushed or forced vocal sound

- Understanding
- Modeling
- Emotional issue.

Lots of external muscles, too much breath energy.

See chin rising or falling or neck strain.

Suggest:

- “Efficient singing feels easy in throat. Let’s explore!”
- The “Whoop”
- “Sing in own bubble.”
- “Sing as if younger.”
- Re-explain resonance areas again.

Refine Vocal Technique

A pushed or forced vocal sound

- Explain: power and intensity come slowly over many years.
- “Nobody is alike.”
 - I.e. same height, not same size clothes
 - Voice is what it is.
 - No copying.
- “Vocal cords must get thinner as pitch rises.”
(rubber band)
- Exercise on OO or EE vowels. Why?
- “Practice singing to a young child.”
- Vocal models

Refine Vocal Technique

Nasal sounds

- Soft palate down.

Suggest:

- Inner smile. “Smile at yourself, don’t let others see.”
“Pretend something is funny; don’t let teacher see!”
- Exercise: use pilot consonant **K** with **OO**.
- Exercise: **Ng – gah**
- Exercise: **Yah, Yah Why?**
- Imagine lifting back molars as sing.
- Vocal models

Refine Vocal Technique

Loud chest-voice singing rising to sudden quiet head-voice singing.

- Weak lengthener muscles
- Static larynx adjustment in chest voice or head voice

Suggest:

- See process for strengthening head-voice range and coordinating middle range.
- Remind: each note is different combination of muscle actions.
- Toy
- Vocal models

Refine Vocal Technique

Un-projected singing

- Developmental: strength and coordination
- Breath
- Understanding

Suggest:

- Faster air
- Strength and coordination exercises
- “Send your voice out to...”
- “Sing on your air.” “Keep air flowing.” (Roll hands while singing.)
- Toy microphone
- Vocal models
- Sing at home.

Refine Vocal Technique

Inability to sing in chest voice

- Idea of singing, vocal models
- Emotional issues: inhibited, wanting to appear non-pushy, introvert, fear of embarrassment
- Experiential issues: no full chest voice even when speaking

Suggest:

- Fry tone and add more air.
- Slow, sustained warm-ups from middle C to E4 with father, hey, or at vowels.
- “Sound is not as loud / bright as it sounds.”
- “Not using this chest voice to sing is like having two legs, but only using one to walk.”

Refine Vocal Technique

False vibrato

- Make voice bigger, brighter, older, more powerful.
 - Copying vocal models
- 4 ways to make vibrato: tongue tension, jaw tension, epigastrium area tension, or vibrato with the intrinsic muscles.**

Suggest:

1. Feel tongue, jaw, epigastrium area as sing.
2. See self too. Notice where tension happens.
3. Re-teach singing technique without tension.
4. Say “let go” to the unwanted tension if need.
5. Vocal models

Refine Vocal Technique

Lack of legato singing

- Disengagement from breath
- No concept phrase yet

Suggest:

- Sing full phrase – one breath – with lip buzz or rolled R's. If sound stops, disengaged.
- Sing with continuous hand movements. Show phrase.
- Speak phrases: energized speaking in same range.
- Draw phrases and sing as marker/finger/arm moves.
- Vocal models

Refine Vocal Technique

Chest voice range with little support

- Habit of speaking. (In chest-voice range, we revert to poor speech habits.)

Suggest:

- Speak words elongated, energized while doing:
 - bicycle
 - plank
 - one foot lifted
 - simple jogging or other light calisthenics
- Sing, in range, continuous Yee.

Caution: do not sing in this range too loudly! Just sing well supported!

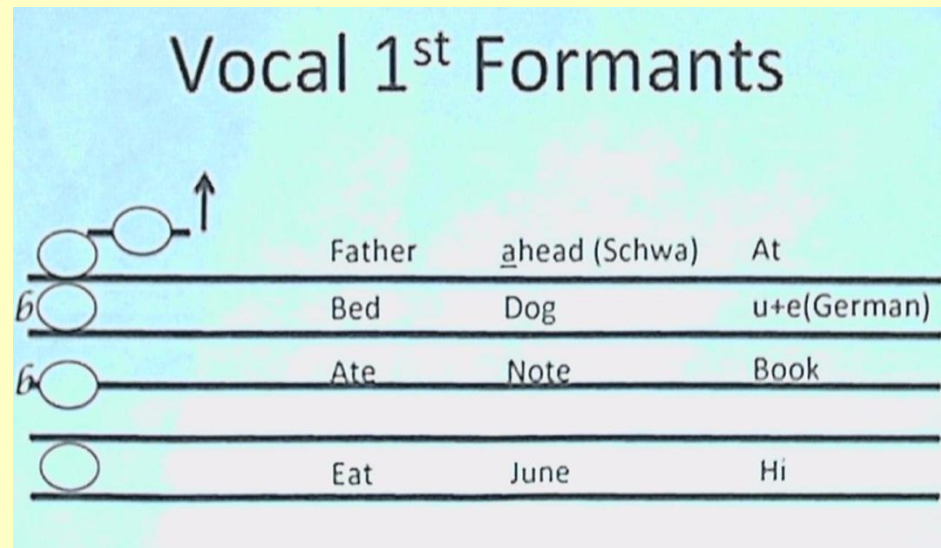
Refine Vocal Technique

A too-tight or out-of-tune sound above B4.

- Not enough space for vowel
- External muscles creating tension, interfering
 - vocal range issue.

Suggest:

- Modify vowels toward more neutral vowel.
- Speak words in higher range, no external muscle tension.



Refine Vocal Technique

Flat singing

- Many possible causes!
- Most prevalent: vowel shape, inadequate breath support, weak head-voice muscles, singing too long in high tessitura

Suggest:

- Lighter singing
- Engage appropriate breath energy
- Inner smile
- Strength/coordination exercises
- Modify vowels
- Re-arrange melody

Refine Vocal Technique

Sharp singing

- Too much air flow for pitch
- In passage zones, muscle management issue

Suggest:

- “Sing in your own bubble.”
- Sing quieter on passage zone notes. Why?
- Re-work synergy of muscle engagement.
- Slow down phrases to practice. Why?
- See extending vocal range information.

Refine Vocal Technique

Out-of-tune singing

- Inattention to inner hearing of own voice
- Inexperience – no strong pitch neural network yet

Suggest:

- Close ears and listen in head.
- Practice matching pitches. A LITTLE EVERY DAY!
- Explore/practice different registers.
- This will take TIME!
- Be patient!

Refine Vocal Technique

Overall vowels: too bright

- Too much emphases on mouth space
- Vocal models
- Exaggerated mouth opening

Suggest: re-balance spaces of mouth/throat.

- Imagine candy on back of tongue; don't let it touch roof of mouth, release jaw, inner smile. Sing!
- Beginning of yawn (Pretend in class; don't want teacher to see; keep your lips closed.) Oh to EE Sing!
- Feel more space in back of mouth with tongue still touching your front bottom teeth. Show picture.
- Exercise: Go with strong G.

Refine Vocal Technique

Overall vowels: too dark.

- Too much emphases on oropharynx
- Tongue pulled back

Suggest:

- Brighter vowels
- Imagine feeling them on front of face.
- “Sing out your eye teeth.”
- Thee – ah with sustained, voiced TH.
- Show “rabbit teeth.”
- Zee – ah with sustained ZZ.
- Vee - ah while showing “rabbit teeth.”
- Tongue against bottom front teeth
- Loosen rabbit teeth to more subtle muscle engagement. Lips held out from teeth.

Refine Vocal Technique

Thinking too hard

- Too much information getting in way of singing
- Anxiety, other emotional issues
- Trying too hard.

Suggest:

- Focus students' attention on the expressive qualities of the music, text and/or on the audience.
- Movement: marching the beat as singing, showing phrases with arms, etc. Be creative!

Note: Conscious mind gives intention. Subconscious mind does the work without “thinking.”

“Thinking” gets in the way of singing.

Remember only teach 1 idea in each class!

Differentiation

- You cannot teach alone.
- Students bear responsibility too!
- Teach, label, model, and guide them in self-awareness.

**Singing is: choices, subtle changes.
Students CAN learn their own voices.**

- Process:
 1. Teach, label, and model.
 2. Work: extremes, opposites, and possibilities
 3. Students: notice – feel and hear – and recognize what is happening.

4. Experiment with changes, feel and hear again.

5. Give visual and aural feedback.

– Each child must discover own way!

– Students then talk.

i.e. pair share to cement it in bodymind

They will all be different! Don't assume all students will physically feel what you feel and hear what you hear.

No bodymind is the same!

- Partners monitor each other. Give feedback.
- Small groups or sections sing
Students' sounds and habits will be hidden!
Must hear themselves sing alone and/or
in small groups
- Others watch, listen, share observations.
- All are learning!

- All students:
 - Different places
 - Progress at different rates
 - Reach standards at different times
 - May not achieve until next teacher

But...

- You laid foundation.
- Gave training
- Modeled and explained
- Helped individuals become aware and discover
- Trust process.

Note: How long does it take me?

Once-a-week class, at least 6 months.

Give them time, and give yourself time!

Healthy singing for a lifetime

- Voice is delicate instrument
- Must be protected and supervised carefully.
- **Choose music appropriate for children.**
- Musically and vocally, where are they **really**?
- **YOU** must take care of their voices.

DO NO HARM!

- No extreme volume or pitch.
- No singing:
 - too high for too long
 - too low for too long
 - too loud for too long

Healthy voices for a lifetime.

- Limit extended rehearsal singing.
- Vocal muscles **must** have rest!
- Consider limiting choirs children participate in.
- Do not sing if sick.
- Train children to recognize own symptoms.
- Hoarseness = swollen tissues. Drink fluids; be quiet; re-examine behavior pattern.

With care, humans can sing well into their 80's.

DO NO HARM!