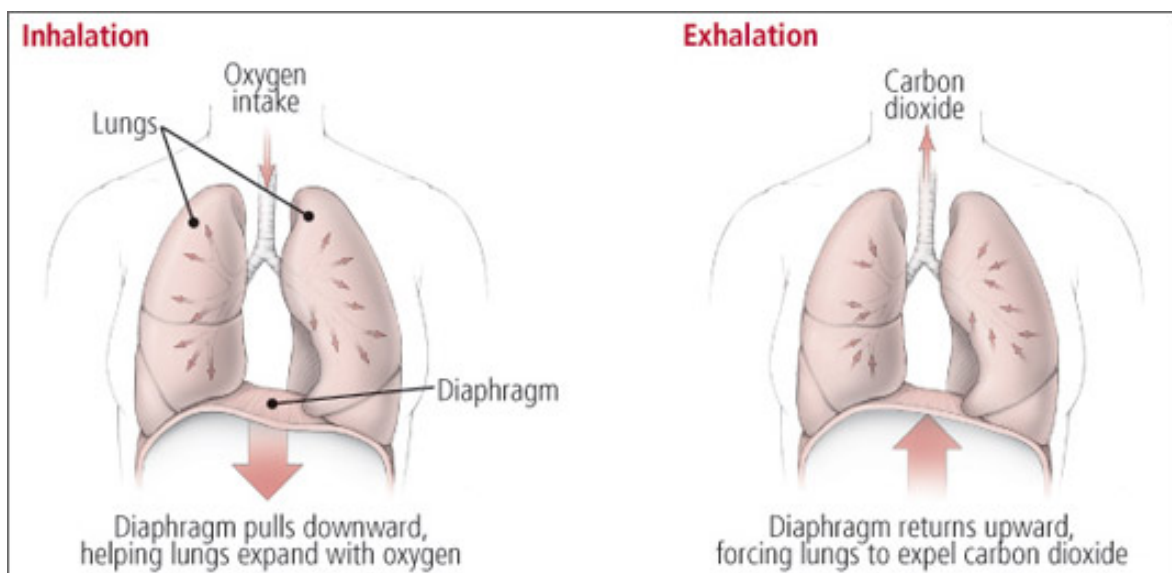
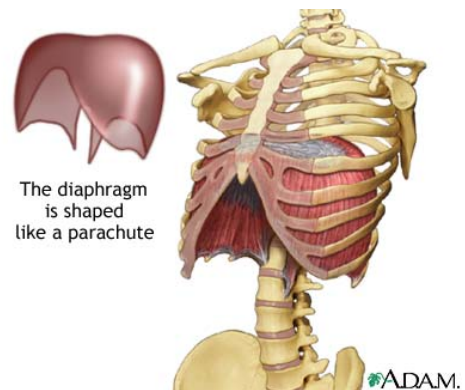


Warming Up: Breathing

Breath support is one of the big keys to singing beautifully in a way that maintains vocal health!! Warming up before you sing is like stretching before a marathon.

The vocal chords flutter together like two pieces of paper with air blown between each piece. Without air propelling the fluttering, there is no sound.

- **Good posture** is important every time you sing – it makes a better (richer, more resonant) sound and aids in effective breath support. Stand, or sit at the edge of a sturdy, stable chair.
- **The Diaphragm** is a muscle that divides the chest from the abdomen and enables us to breathe deeply and do the type of breathing needed for good singing technique.
- When you breathe deeply, shoulders stay low and relaxed, & belly expands forward gently.
- As you breathe in, the **diaphragm** drops downward, pulling your lungs with it and pressing against abdominal organs to make room for your lungs to expand as they fill with air. As you breathe out, the diaphragm presses back upward against your lungs, helping to expel carbon dioxide.



- You can experience deep, diaphragmatic breathing by lying down on the floor on your back (a folded towel can be placed under your head if needed). Arch your back into a comfortable position. Put your hands on your stomach, and breath slowly, feeling your belly move gently up and down. You may need to lie there for several minutes for your body to begin breathing diaphragmatically naturally. You can also place a book on your stomach and look for it to move up and down slowly. Be aware of the position of your shoulders (low, relaxed, and not hunched forward). Mimic this breathing and relaxed shoulders while sitting on the edge of a chair.
 - Singing requires deep, diaphragmatic breathing in which the air is exhaled passed the vocal chords in a smooth, stable, steady rate of flow. With practice, singers can learn to conserve some of their air and exhale at a steady rate (while singing), allowing the singer to make it to the end of a phrase without needing to gasp for air at a non-musical moment. If your throat hurts after singing, you are probably not breathing properly and are instead trying to force your voice to produce the type of sound that good breathing does naturally.
 - **Lip and Tongue Trill Breathing Warm Up:** Take a deep breath and exhale on a lip trill. If lip trills are difficult, start with tongue trills. Count slowly, first making the lip trill last for 4-6 seconds several times, then 8 seconds, then 12-16 seconds.
 - **Lip Trill with a melody:** after a few deep breaths and simple lip or tongue trills, sing “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” in two phrases on a lip trill. If you can’t make it the whole way without the sound stopping this is because the speed of air traveling passed your vocal chords is not a consistent, steady speed. If this happens, don’t get frustrated: just try again and sing the melody faster so you can do each long phrase on one breath. This can be a challenge even for some advanced voice students, and if you have trouble with this some days, trying holding out just one note or sing a different, simple melody (even Hot Cross Buns or the ABC song).
1. First phrase, all in one breath:
“My country ‘tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.”
 2. Breathe in, keeping shoulders low, allowing the belly to grow out and round.
 3. Second phrase, all in one breath:
“Land where my father’s died, Land of the pilgrim’s pride, from every mountain side: Let freedom ring!”

Warm-Ups: Vocalizing

- **Raising the soft palate** changes the resonating cavity of the mouth, improving the tone of the voice and allowing for the potential for increased projection of the voice, as well as creating space for high notes to be properly in tune.

The soft palate is the part in the top, back of your throat, behind your back teeth and the hard, bony top of the mouth. The soft palate naturally raises when you yawn. Start to inhale as if you will yawn, but keep your lips closed. Allow space between your teeth.

- Inhale with the start of a yawn, then sigh with a high pitch sliding to a comfortable low pitch on a relaxed, neutral “ah” vowel. If this sounds silly, loud, and annoying, you are probably doing it right.
- Relax the jaw. Many voice teachers say, “drop your jaw,” but be sure you aren’t pushing your jaw down to the ground. Allowing your jaw to “drop” means you release it, and it swings down and back, in towards your neck. If you do this right, you might feel like an old lady with no teeth who is about to drool on herself.
- There are as many vocalises (specific warm up melodies or exercises) as there are singers and voice teachers. The best type of vocalise on any given day could vary, depending on the type of music you are practicing that day. If you are performing a fast song with lots of words, choose something fast with many consonants (e.g. sing “somebody, somebody, somebody.”). Search on google or youtube for ideas for vocal warm ups that suit your voice and the material you are preparing.
- **Mezzo di Voce:** This warm up exercise requires you to sing the same note for as long as comfortable on one breath, while shaping the note to start out as quietly as possible, gradually grow louder and more intense, and then fade out gradually. Try to maintain a consistent, even, and pleasing tone that stays in tune while doing this.
- Practice singing different **vowels**, as they each can create a different type of sound from the same voice. This is due to a unique acoustic characteristic of the vocal tract called “formants.” You might even notice with practice that a certain vowel naturally sounds more powerful or pleasant than other vowels when sung with the same pitch.

Practicing

- Write **breath marks** into your music or lyrics. This could look like an apostrophe or a checkmark at the place where you should breath. Practice taking breaths at the same place each time.
- Pay careful attention to **diction**. If it’s not appropriate for the character of the song, make sure you are clearly saying things like “don’t you” instead of “don-chew.” **Pay attention to the ending sounds of words!**
- At least sometimes **practice while looking into the mirror**. Is your facial expression matching the lyrics? Also, watch to make sure when you open your

mouth for an open “ah” vowel that your jaw is dropping but not also sliding to the right or left.

- Try to **end each rehearsal or practice on a good note**, even if it means you finish up a few minutes earlier, rather than keep kicking the horse. You can always use that time to look at the score, or work on memorizing lyrics.
- If at all possible, **memorize the lyrics and music**. Singing can be a lot of work and looking at the music or words can be distracting. But if it’s not memorized it’s better to use music/lyrics than to make an avoidable mistake – unless they specify no music.
- **Practice introducing yourself** and the name of the piece and composer’s name. Look in the mirror and say, “My name is (full name). Today I will be singing (song title) by (composer), from the musical (musical title).” If your audition piece is not from a musical or other larger work, simply give your name and the title and composer of the piece.
- Some people have more successful rehearsal if they wear clothes and shoes that are similar to clothes that would be worn during a performance or audition. Many aspects of singing are mental, and for some people wearing performance clothes help them achieve a professional stage mindset that brings rehearsals to a new level. Practice in your **performance clothes** at least once. Choose clothes that are loose around the belly in order to give room to breathe deeply without stretching material or feeling self-conscious. Some singers find that wearing heels helps to maintain good posture throughout a rehearsal.
- It is better to practice frequently for a short period of time rather than rarely for a long time.

Before & During an Audition

- Get plenty of sleep and drink lots of water before an audition where you have to sing.
- Avoid drinking or eating dairy products in the time leading up to an audition, especially milk. Dairy products can increase the production of mucous and interrupt with your breathing, swallowing, and overall comfort.
- Avoid drinking caffeine before an audition: it can dry out your mouth.
- Make sure judges know who you are and what piece you will be auditioning with. Be confident, speak clearly, and look at the judges when you introduce yourself. Remember to practice this in the mirror before your audition and make sure you pronounce the composer’s name correctly!
- Exercises that strengthen the core and/or improve balance or posture (abdomen and back) muscles can improve your singing!