
Laryngeal and Vocal Fold Warm up and Exercises

The following exercises are designed to reduce vocal fold and laryngeal tension and to increase range of motion, balance between airflow and vocal fold closure and to ease vocal production.

The Warm Up

1. Take the first two to three minutes stretching your upper body (or if you have time the whole body). Reach up with your arms; try to bring your elbows together in the back. Lower your arms and shake your hands down by your side.
2. Roll your shoulders. Begin first with the left shoulder. Roll it 8 to 10 times. Allow the rotations to become larger as it is comfortable to do so. Repeat with the right shoulder. Make the movements slow and easy.
3. Roll your neck 8 to 10 times to the right and left. Make these motions slow and sweeping. Let your mouth rest in an easy, semi-open position. Go slowly and each time your chin comes back to center stop for a moment.
4. Now, take 10 deep breaths into the lower abdomen. Feel your stomach expand; feel your lower back fill with air. Pay careful attention to your chest and neck which should both remain still and flat.
5. As you breathe in, the stomach should move outward. As you breathe out, the stomach should flatten. Remember that breathing is a matter of moving the muscles of the stomach, without tensing the muscles of the chest and shoulders.
6. After the 10 breaths, inhale through the nose or pursed lips then exhale with five easy "S" sounds. After producing "S", switch to "Z". Concentrate on the vibration of your tongue and roof of your mouth. Make sure your shoulders remain still.
7. Try some easy, exaggerated chewing, like you have a few pieces of bubble gum in your mouth. If necessary, use your hands to massage your cheeks. Chew for two to three minutes without making sound, then chant or hum while you are chewing. Let your voice come out easily and softly.
8. Once you feel relaxed and warmed up, try counting in sequence, one (inhale); one, two (inhale); one, two, three (inhale); one, two, three, four (inhale); one, two, three, four, five (inhale); one, two, three, four, five, six (inhale), etc. Open your mouth as you count and support your breath with your abdomen. Remember to use short inhales and longer exhales as you increase each sequence. Count slowly and continuously—making all the numbers connect together. As soon as you feel tension or are out of breath, stop. Set a goal for how long you can comfortably count (10, 15, 20?).



Laryngeal and Vocal Cord Exercises

These exercises should be completed slowly and with attention to your voice quality. They should be done at as low a volume as you can sustain. Anyone can belt out sounds, but the exercise is in maintaining improved voice quality in your softest register. Have some water close by so you can take sips during these exercises. Repeat each one 10 times.

1. The Yawn-Sigh:
 - a. Begin by attempting the most authentic yawn you can imagine. Really try to yawn a true yawn. You may yawn better by stretching your arms and shoulders as one might do in the morning.
 - b. As you exhale, sigh 'ah' and hold it out for three to five seconds. The voice quality should be soft and gentle as it comes from deep down in your throat. Don't allow the voice to turn off mid-way through your sigh. The exercise is in the soft gentle sigh.
2. The Fog Horn:
 - a. Begin with a deep lower abdominal breath (see step one of the warm up on page 1).
 - b. Purse your lips into a narrow 'O' shape. Make an 'oo' vowel sound (like 'oops') on a low comfortable note and hold for six to eight seconds. Your voice quality should be very quiet and breathy.
 - c. If you are doing this exercise properly, you will feel a vibration in your lips or nose. If you don't feel this, try using a lower pitch and more air.
3. The Lip or Tongue Trill: This exercise is similar to the fog horn above.
 - a. Begin by taking a deep lower abdominal breath.
 - b. Bring the lips and teeth gently together and jut your lips out slightly. Make sure your lips and cheeks are relaxed.
 - c. Begin breathing out as you produce the sound "Brrrr." The lips should trill consistently. If they stop moving or stop trilling, take another breath and begin again. If you have trouble trilling with your lips, try your tongue.
4. The Pitch Slide:
 - a. Your goal is to slide softly from your lowest pitch to your highest pitch as you say the word "Whoop."
 - b. Make sure the sound is soft, with lots of breath support and with an extra 'puh' sound at the end of the word. Imagine saying "Whoop-puh."
 - c. Repeat 10 times, then reverse and slide your pitch from high to low. This time, say the word "boom." Repeat 10 times.
 - d. In both cases, focus on the sound and vibration at your lips. The goal is to perform the slides without voice breaks.