

Singing Exercises

From [Singing Exercises For Dummies, with CD](#) by Pamela S. Phillips

The best way to become a better singer is to work on singing exercises that help you improve your tone and technique. These exercises can range from simple vocal warm-ups to drills that help you build your skills and fine-tune your sound. After you warm up your voice, you're ready to tackle the world of vocal exercises, starting with a drill for practicing breath control and moving on to work on your tone.

A "Hum"able Vocal Warm-Up

Always kick off a practice session by warming up your voice for 10 to 20 minutes. Select a vocal exercise that starts in the part of your voice that's easy to sing. Sing the warm-up exercise softly at first and then gradually increase your volume.

Here's an exercise you can use to get your voice warmed up and ready to practice. It starts lower in your voice and gradually moves up the scale. The exercise lists the word *hum* because *humming* (singing a note with your teeth open and your lips closed) is a great way to warm up the voice. Feel free to use this exercise and move higher or lower in your range to help warm up your entire voice.

Even if you don't read music, you can use this exercise as a warm-up because the pattern in the figure sounds like the first three notes of the chorus in "Do-Re-Mi," the song the children sing with Maria in *The Sound of Music* by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. Using the song as a guide, think of the notes in the pattern as using the syllables do-re-mi-re-do.

hum _____

hum _____

hum _____

hum _____

How to Develop Breath Control with the Help of a Familiar Song

Singers work on *breath control* — controlling the flow of air as they sing — so they can manage singing short and long phrases in songs. Practice controlling your breathing by first singing shorter phrases and then gradually working your way up to longer phrases.

An easy way to work on breath control is to sing through a familiar song, such as “Amazing Grace,” while focusing on controlling your breath. Use the following figure to remind yourself of the melody and the lyrics of “Amazing Grace” and then follow the steps to work on breath control.

The image shows two lines of musical notation for the song "Amazing Grace" in 3/4 time. The first line contains the lyrics "A - maz - ing_ grace! How sweet the" with a breath mark (a horizontal line) under the word "ing". The second line contains the lyrics "sound that saved a_ wretch like me!" with a breath mark under the word "a".

1. Sing through the two lines in the figure, paying attention to where you take a breath.

Most likely, you sing the words “Amazing grace” and then take a breath before singing the words “how sweet the sound.”

2. Sing the two lines again and pay attention to how you move your body when you inhale before and after the phrase “Amazing grace.”

When you inhale, you want your ribs, sides, abdominal muscles, and back to expand. As you sing, you want those same muscles that just expanded on the inhalation to gradually move back to their normal resting position. Allowing the muscles to collapse too quickly moves the air out too quickly and doesn’t leave you with enough breath to sing the whole phrase.

3. Sing “Amazing grace! How sweet the sound” *before* you take a breath.

You may need several tries before you can comfortably make it through all these words on one breath, and you may need to practice for several days before you can sing the first two lines in one breath. **Remember:** You don’t want your body to be tight or to push to continue singing. If you feel your body tighten as you try a longer phrase, take a breath and try the phrase again.

A Vocal Resonance Exercise

When you sing, your voice echoes, creating vibrations throughout your head and chest. This echoing of tone is called *resonance*. Knowing how to change the resonance of your singing voice allows you to make a variety of sounds as you sing. Use the following steps and the accompanying figure to help you practice controlling your vocal resonance:

1. Sing the first measure in the figure, sustaining the sound of the *mmm* as if you were humming and then moving into the *ee* vowel.

Notice the buzzing or vibrating sensation you feel on your lips. This vibrating sensation is from the vibrations of resonance of your singing voice. The *ee* vowel in this measure is the vowel sound in the word *me*. As you sing from the *mmm* to the *ee*, try to keep the vibrations happening in the same place. You may need to practice singing this measure a few times to keep the vibrations in the same place. The apostrophes above the figure are breath marks, indicating when you should take a breath.

2. Try singing the second measure, which moves from *mmm* to *ah*.

The *ah* vowel is the sound in the first syllable of the word *father*. As you sing from the *mmm* to the *ah*, try to keep the vibrations in the same place (around your lips). You may feel the vibrations on the *ah* in the back of your mouth compared to the front of your mouth, which is likely where you felt them in Step 1 on the *ee* vowel.

Tip: Record yourself singing through the first and second measures and then listen to the resonance. Pay attention to the change of resonance you hear from the *mmm* to the vowels.

3. Practice singing the third measure by starting right on the *ee* vowel and moving to the *ah* vowel.

Notice whether you can find the same kind of vibrations of resonance that you found when you moved from the *mmm* to the vowels in Steps 1 and 2.

