

Active Vocal Technique for Young Singers

Something to Sing About



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E-BOOK

Lisa Blasi

Includes Online
Supplemental materials

S. Blasi

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Warm-ups

The voice works like a fruit smoothie. A perfect smoothie blends all the separate fruit pieces until each one is indistinguishable. As you work on specific areas of vocal technique with your young singers, help them understand how all the moving parts work together.

Any vocal exercise or folk tune can be a warm-up using a step-by-step approach. First, identify an area of vocal production/technique. Using the songs from your repertoire or vocalizations as source material, create activities incorporating movement, vocal or body percussion, drama, Orff instruments, unpitched percussion, scarves, singing games, etc. Students will gain an awareness of vocal health and healthy tone production, actively and effectively. The warm-ups presented here are models you may use as written, or can adapt for your classroom needs. Use them at the beginning of class or throughout the lesson as part of the repertoire study.

Just like you could not possibly eat everything on a buffet, you cannot tackle all aspects of vocal technique “in one sitting.” The voice is multi-faceted, and all aspects of singing technique build upon each other. Pick one or two elements of vocal technique to work on at a time. Remember, teaching vocal technique is a process and a journey, not a sprint.



Posture and Alignment

Anatomy - Slides 1-4

Healthy vocal production begins with proper alignment. Students/singers stand with feet six inches apart, shoulders back, and sternums high. Begin each class, making sure students stand with upright with proper alignment.

Stretching

- ♪ Warm-up with simple stretching activities at the beginning of each class.
- ♪ Students mirror the teacher.
- ♪ Invite students to lead when comfortable.

String

Warm-ups - Slide # 1

- ♪ Imagine a string attached to top of head extending to the ceiling.
- ♪ Have students lift the sternum up and rib cage out while keeping shoulders down.



Stacking the Vertebrae

Warm-Ups - Slides #2-3 [Video]

- ♪ Bend from waist down with knees slightly bent, head and hands released (relaxed).
- ♪ Come up slowly, stacking one vertebra at a time, until upright.



Water Bowl

Warm-Ups - Slides #4-5 [Video]

- ♪ Imagine the pelvis as a bowl filled with water. Try to keep all the water in the bowl.
- ♪ Tip "water bowl" forward. Balance becomes front heavy and out of alignment. (Fig. 1)
- ♪ Tip "water bowl" backwards. Spine arches and balance becomes back heavy and out of alignment. (Fig. 2)

- ♪ Tuck in pelvis to keep “water bowl” upright. Position feet six inches apart with knees slightly bent. Hold head high with chin down, shoulders back and down, sternum lifted. This alignment should be just right for singing. (Fig. 3)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Breathing

Anatomy - Slides #5-16

As gas is to a car, so breath is to the voice. Connecting sound to breath when singing is crucial for vocal health and ease of production. Each breath (inhale + exhale) connects like links in a chain as each phrase begins and ends. Pay close attention to the transfer of energy from inhale (relaxation) to exhale (contraction).

Breathing Basics

Inhale

- ♪ Breathe silently. Breaths should be invisible.
- ♪ Breathe high in the face (through the nasal cavity), away from the throat. Smell a rose.
- ♪ Keep mouth open during the breath. Jaw and tongue stay relaxed.
- ♪ Breathe in on the vowel sounds “oh” and “oo.” Maintain open mouth and throat. Raise the soft palate (like the beginning of a yawn or imagine a football shape inside mouth).
- ♪ Keep head still, shoulders down, as ribs expand and sternum stays high.
- ♪ Relax lower abdomen. Feel the pelvic floor release and drop.



Exhale

- ♪ The outflow of air should be the focused release of breath that supports tone.
- ♪ Stay focused on the breath going through entire phrase.
- ♪ Keep mouth and jaw relaxed and still. Allow breath to do the work.

Chair Breathing

Warm-ups - Slide #7

- ♪ Stand behind a chair, and bend from the waist while keeping back and arms

The Lesson Plans

In this next section, find ways to flesh out simple warm-ups into full-fledged lesson plans. Many of the following lessons target more than one objective. Some of the experiences included in this section will take the entire class period. Others can be used at the beginning or end of class to reinforce a concept you are covering in the repertoire (i.e., breathing, legato, resonance, diction, etc.). Each lesson is rich in content and scope. Use these lesson plans to meet your unique classroom needs and consider using them as templates for coming up with your lesson ideas.



I Eat My Peas With Honey

Trad.
arr. L. Blasi

Speech

(A)

I eat my peas with hon - ey. I've done it all my life. It

Sp.

makes the peas taste fun - ny, but it keeps them on the knife.

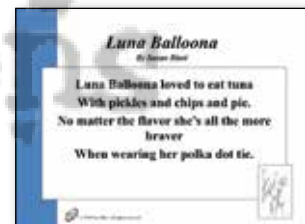
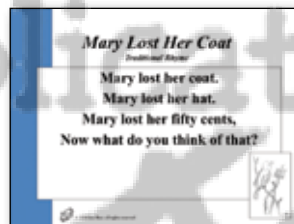
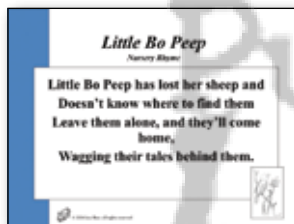
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(B)

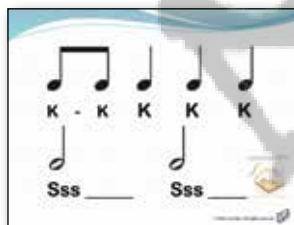
Shhhh - T t - t T T Shhhh - T - t - t - T - T

This lesson is a wonderful way to actively get your students warmed up for singing.
Materials Needed (in supplemental files)

♪ Poem Cards



♪ Beat Boxing Cards



Process

- ♪ Speak poem two times in 4/4 meter (poem = A Section).
- ♪ Create locomotor movements for poem (use scarves or movement to reinforce phrase).
- ♪ Pick two beat boxing cards for the B Section (repeat beat boxing card pattern 4 times).
- ♪ Create non-locomotor movements for vocal percussion (motions reinforce diaphragmatic breathing over clavicle breathing).

Blueberry, Blueberry, Raspberry Pie

L. Blasi

Voice
 Blue-ber-ry, blue-ber-ry, rasp-ber-ry pie, give me some more or I'm go-ing to die.

SX
 BX
 Vibraslap
 Sn
 Cl
 Ch l
 Ch r
 P l
 P r
 St
 CBX

V
 Blue-ber-ry, blue-ber-ry, rasp-ber-ry pie, I want some more!

SX
 BX
 Perc.
 Sn
 Cl
 Ch l
 Ch r
 P l
 P r
 St
 CBX

Sn = Snap; Cl = Clap; Ch l = Chest Left; Ch r = Chest Right; P l = Patsch Left; P r = Patsch Right; St = Stomp.

Warm-up with Body Percussion – Focus on Vowels and Diction

Grade Level: 4th-6th Grade

Materials Needed

- ♪ Pie cards with rhythm (see supplemental materials.)
- ♪ Orff instruments (see score) and small hand percussion (optional)



Process

- ♪ Teach class words of song.
- ♪ Class claps rhythm of words while speaking text.
- ♪ Class identifies rhythm of words.
- ♪ Sing melody of song using solfege. Take time to review flattened third (“me”).
- ♪ Class sings solfege with hand signs.

Encourage class to accent each consonant with a “solar plexus punch.”

- ♪ Write phonetic spelling of words on board (students can help with this step).
- ♪ Class sings melody with words demonstrating proper vowels and diction.
- ♪ Label “I” as a diphthong. Demonstrate right and wrong way to sing “I” (ah-yah compared to ah).
- ♪ Sing song paying close attention to correct pronunciation of “I.”
- ♪ Demonstrate right and wrong way to sing “r” (short “r” sound then straight to the vowel compared to elongated “rrrrrr.” (Save it for “talk like a pirate day.”)).
- ♪ Sing “raspberry” first over-accenting the “r” and second time correctly.
- ♪ Sing song again.
- ♪ Teach body percussion (second half of the A Section).

Extensions

- ♪ Modulate on repetition of the A Section.
- ♪ Sing in canon.
- ♪ Create movements or hand jive during eight-beat word chain.

Transfer rhythm of words to pitched and unpitched percussion instruments.

- ♪ Rhythm of words can be transferred to choir binders.
- ♪ Students can create lyrics for ms. 1 and ms. 3 (keep ms. 2 and ms. 4 as is).

**Many more lesson plans with
songs and activities included in the book.**



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