

Love to Sing Programme 2022

WEEK 3 - SUPPORT



Reminder: stand well and support your sound, breath quietly, sing freely and with resonance.

A supported sound is firm, in control, and does not waiver involuntarily in pitch or volume. You will already have some support if you sing with good posture and breathe well using proper muscular control as taught in earlier weeks. Learning additional anchoring techniques will help further.

Anchoring involves muscular effort, but must never make the voice sound forced, muscular or effortful. Anchoring can help control the voice during quiet passages, or when we need volume and energy. The idea is to create firm 'scaffolding' around the voice – which allows the voice to remain free within it.

Torso anchoring

- Imagine planting ski poles in the ground, which are then stuck. Attempting to pull them up will engage the muscles in your back
- Stand opposite a partner holding both wrists. With arms bent at the elbow, pull against each other. Don't lean back – feel the muscles of the back engaging
- Imagine squeezing oranges under your armpits
- Turn your arms in their sockets, keeping them close to you.

Internal anchoring

- Flaring nostrils – imagine the smell of something you really like
- Bite a toffee apple – and your teeth stick. Pull them out of the apple with the upper jaw, while relaxing the lower jaw.

External anchoring

- Do the head pat! Push down a little with your hand on the crown of your head, and push up a little with your head
- Imagine you are putting on a really tight swimming cap!

Don't forget!

Whenever you start engaging muscles to anchor the voice, there is a tendency for constriction to sneak in elsewhere. You need to use the 'silent laugh' to combat this.

It will be a constant balancing act to strike between the muscles which need to work to support the voice, and not allowing tension/constriction to sneak into the voice.

You may find it easier to focus on the head and neck anchoring first, and then gradually build in full body support.

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VOWELS and ARTICULATION

Whilst notes can sound beautiful on their own, they benefit greatly from lyrics to help 'tell the story' of our music. In general, vowel sounds will carry the majority of the sound – our aim is to elongate vowel sounds to achieve smooth delivery. However, the vowel sounds also need some consonants to make sense! Consonants can interrupt the smooth delivery – but with good diction and understanding of technique, it can all come together to make something truly special.

Jaw space

Believe it or not, opening your mouth as wide as you can to sing does **not** mean the sound will be better! It is important that your jaw movement is managed carefully, or there is a risk of long term damage to the cartilage and other surrounding tissues.

- Put your fingers on the hinge of your jaw. Open your mouth slowly and notice what happens. Put your thumbs underneath your jaw and do the same, feel what happens. Notice at what point you can start to feel tension come into play
- Reset, and do it again – opening the mouth just enough to let the jaw 'hang' freely. This is the position you want – NO WIDER!! There should be no tension in the jaw.



General rules for good vowels

- Think tall – keep the tongue against the lower gum ridge and lips off the front teeth
- Open the mouth enough to let the sound come out but not too much as to add tension to the external muscles (resonance comes from within – you can't push it out!)

You might think that there are only five vowels – whilst this may be true of the alphabet, there are more vowel sounds (honest!). The most commonly practiced singing vowels are EE (as in see) EH (as in hay) AH (as in star) AW (as in soar) and OO (as in do). They are larger in shape, more resonant and fuller in volume than other vowels. There are also other sounds such as UH (as in love) IH (as in this) and AA (as in cat). These are not quite as resonant as the others.

Diphthongs

A diphthong is defined as *“a vowel sound occupying a single syllable, during the articulation of which the tongue moves continuously from one position to another, as in the pronunciation of a in late”* (Collins Concise Dictionary).

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In basic terms – it's when a vowel has more than one sound – you have to change the sound to make it work. The example above uses 'late' – you may think this word only has one 'vowel sound' but it has two, joined together by a diphthong L-EH-EE- T.

The secret of success is to be aware of the sounds you need, but not to get too obsessive about it and make them laboured! Focus on a good clear first vowel sound, and add the diphthong sound at the very end. The first sound is the 'target' vowel – don't let the second sound get in the way.

Consonants

The vowels carry the sound but the consonants carry the meaning! Try singing a line from any song without using any consonants – you'd still recognise a simple melody, but the meaning would be lost. Our challenge is to use them just enough so as to make meaning from the words, but not to disrupt the flow of the music.

Some consonants are soft or 'singable' – like m, n, g and l.

Some are hard or 'percussive' – k, p and t.

- Say, very slowly, the phrase 'I'm dreaming of a white Christmas' – notice which consonants are singable (and help you join one vowel to the next) and which are not.
- Now try singing the phrase, with good vocal technique. Use the singable consonants to join the words together and try to soften the non-singable ones.

When a group of singers put all the consonants in the same place and all sing similar vowels, we get a sense of unity and togetherness and often experience the 'one voice' sound we are looking for.

Exercise

Sing "The tip of the tongue, the lips and the teeth" on one pitch (for example, singing the whole phrase on each note of a scale). Your challenge is to ensure that the sound is continuous, unbroken and smooth, without losing any sense of the words. It's a really good one!