

Vocal Skills: These five body actions build on each other in the order given.

1. **Posture:** Correct singing posture is an upright, slightly forward stance with the body weight primarily on the balls of the feet.

Common posture problems:

- a. *Swayback*
- b. *Slumping rib cage or bending from the waist*
- c. *Head and/or jaw thrust forward or upward*

2. **Breathing:** The most efficient breathing for singing is a combination of abdominal and rib cage breathing methods.

Effects of improper breathing:

- a. *Inability to sustain phrase endings*
- b. *Inconsistency of tone quality*
- c. *Lack of tone flow*

3. **Phonation:** Phonation is the action of the vocal cords in speaking and singing.

Vocal cords can be closed by:

- a. *Swallowing*
- b. *Bearing down*
- c. *Abdominal action against the diaphragm.* Singers use the abdominal muscles against the lowered diaphragm, while allowing ribs to remain high. When used correctly, the throat will remain open and air will not escape till *the abdominal muscles lift against the diaphragm.* It's important to coordinate this action so your sound will be neither breathy or constricted. A completely relaxed throat is a must for functioning of vocal cords to produce clear tones.

4. **Resonation:** Resonation is the amplification and enrichment of tones produced. The quality of the sound is dependent on the size, shape and surface characteristics of the cavity on which it is resonated. One of the primary resonators is the pharynx (pronounced "fair-inks"). The **pharynx** is the muscular cavity in the throat which connects to the nasal passages, the mouth, the larynx and windpipe, and esophagus.

5. **Articulation:** Articulation is the process by which sounds are shaped. Vowels are sustained and consonants provide split second interruption. Tension is necessary to form consonants, but must be momentary.

To form consonants we use:

- a. *the tongue*
- b. *the lips*
- c. *the soft palate*

Frequent Problems in Vocal Production

The objective in practicing good vocal production is to create ring in the sound.

1. Dark or covered sounds: Indicates a lack of head resonance, a closed soft palate or a high tongue position which dampens out high frequencies.
2. Thin or shallow voices like a glee club: Indicate improper resonance, a lack of chest resonance, a lack of maturity or a mouth that isn't sufficiently opened.
3. Strained voices: Result from a constricted throat created by forcing the lower register too high, by closed soft palate or by tension in the jaw.
4. Breathy tones: Characterized by fuzziness, hoarseness, lack of focus and clarity; indicate poor coordination of vocal and breathing mechanisms, improper resonance or an unhealthy condition of the vocal cords.
5. Vibrato: While vibrato is a natural and desirable characteristic of a healthy voice, confusion arises when other, undesirable conditions are termed "vibrato". One such condition is "tremolo" which has been defined as an abnormal pulsation of the voice marked by a perceptible variation in pitch due to lack of proper coordination of the vocal mechanism, because of incorrect use of the breath or unnatural physical tension. It can result from tension in the jaw or muscles of the throat or larynx, from a fluttering of the epiglottis, from the fluctuation changes in size and shape of the resonating cavities, from singing with too heavy an adjustment, from muscular weakness, from improper breathing habits or from nervousness.

Judging Category Description Book, Section I, Vocal Skills

Skill Builders to Help Understand and Correct Problems

1. Covered sound: understand the sensation of and act of resonating with head resonance
Humming exercises
2. Thin or shallow sound: understand the sensation of resonating with chest resonance
Vocalize in register below Middle C on "oh"
3. Strained sound: understand and improve the release of tension
Yawn-sigh
Humming with manually lowered jaw
General relaxation exercises (Raggedy Ann, shoulder rolls, hula, tongue stretches)
4. Breathy sound: understand and improve proper closure of glottis
Blow out candle
"H" sound
Pant tone
Bark
Weak battery
5. Vibrato: understand and improve use of support mechanism
Inhale; leaving throat open, suspend; exhale. To count of 4 per step
Dog pant
Hiss 20, Speak 20

Directors Resource Manual, Module 7, Vocal Production