

Week One Homework Assignments

- A straw can be used for an amazing number of important purposes when learning to sing. It's the "Swiss Army Knife" for SOVT exercises.
- SOVT stands Semi-Occluded Vocal Tract
 - Fancy way to say the exhalation of your breath is impeded to some extent.
 - This creates a back pressure in your vocal track. This back pressure:
 - Relaxes your vocal folds
 - Puts them in the best position to sing without stress
- Let's go over some exercises:

2.1 Place the straw in your mouth and inhale through the straw-only for a count of four, then exhale through the straw for a count of four. Continue to inhale and exhale as long as you are comfortable. You may only manage three or so repetitions to start. It's okay. Remove the straw, breathe normally for awhile, then repeat. This is an effective way to strengthen your core.

2.2 Use the straw as a visual and auditory feedback mechanism for controlled breathing

- Exhale, relax ab muscles for deep breath,
 - Take a singer's breath from your abdomen, as practiced in class.
 - Inhale **suspending** (not holding) for 4 seconds.
 - Purse your lips around the straw so that no air leaks when you exhale.
 - Place the other end of the straw an inch or two into a glass of water.
 - Exhale at a steady, measured pace
 - Make certain that the bubbling is consistent in sound and bubble height
 - Record the duration of your exhale as benchmark for future exercises.
 - You will want to increase the length of your exhale over time.
 - Repeat five times
- 2.3 Using the straw for proper placement of sound
- Blow into the liquid keeping the bubbles at a constant height.
 - Then alternate voiceless and voiced exhalation at about 3 second intervals
 - Simply "sing" any note that is in your voice range.
 - Do not create any extra tension in your mouth when adding voice.
 - Feel the vibration in the straw, lips and face when voiced.
 - This will become important in future classes

2.4 Again with the straw-end submerged in water, "sing" along with Happy Birthday (found in the "Sing Along" portion of this homework site). You will be able to confirm that you are "singing" on a proper stream of air by the consistency of the bubbles.

Learning Aids:

- Insure that you have downloaded a chromatic tuner app for phone
- If you are **not using** the Tonal Energy Tuner (which has pitch generation capabilities) you will need a piano, keyboard, pitch pipe or the digital piano for computer (as listed in your class folder)

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What most of us lack is the ear training necessary to sing well consistently.

When your ear hears a note (pitch), your brain needs to translate that sound wave and then signal the vocal folds and surrounding muscles to change shape just enough to let the escaping air vibrate those vocal folds at the same frequency as the note being heard. That is how we “sing in tune”. If you know how to whistle, it is the same mechanism.

Creating that ear / vocal fold coordination is a learned skill. Admittedly it is easier as a child, because as we age we become more self-conscious. So we need to park our inhibitions and commit to the process. But like any skill-acquisition it requires consistent practice.

The following exercises will start the process of training your voice to sing on key and will only get better the more you work with it.

- Match Pitch Exercise
 - Begin with a pitch in your speaking voice (as discussed in class - Music Man *Ice cream* example)
 - Don't think about it...just say a word slowly and turn it into a note
 - Repeat it several times to insure it is the same note
 - Using your tuner, identify the note name (B, C, D etc.)
 - Also notice the subscript (2, 3, 4) that accompanies the letter.
 - You will then be able to play that note on the TE Tuner or your pitch generating source.
 - USE EAR BUDS OR EAR PHONES FOR THIS PART OF THE EXERCISE. (Other wise, the Tuner will hear the pitch generated and that will mask your own voice, giving you an incorrect reading)
 - AND/OR count 1-2-3 and repeat several times until it becomes a sort of chant.
 - The last time through, hold the 3, turning it into a note.
 - Repeat the process above to identify what note it is.
 - THEN Listen carefully to any pitch you are trying to match
 - Hear it in your mind
 - Play the pitch again and listen (no singing) again
 - Play the note again
 - Try to match your voice to the note
 - Sing it as a continuous 'yah'
 - Use the your tuner app to check for accuracy
 - The letter of the pitch should match what you are trying to sing
 - The subscript should correctly indicate the note you are trying to match
 - The 'cents' display (right side of the inside circle near the D# of the outer circle) will indicate if you are slightly higher (+) or lower (-) than the pitch.
 - Make the adjustments indicated by the tuner (higher, lower)

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- Keep playing the note occasionally as you make adjustments
- Stop, then play the note again
 - As best you can, match the pitch
 - Make the adjustments indicated again.
 - Repeat several times to reinforce the sound and feeling of your own voice singing that note.
- Play another note and repeat the process
- Speaking versus Singing Voice Range
 - The range of pitches we use to speak is much smaller than the range necessary to sing
 - If you find you are consistently singing below the target pitch
 - Just a little
 - Try smiling as you sing the note
 - Don't force your voice to rise, just think "I have to sing a little higher"
 - Sometimes "mind over matter" works
 - A Lot
 - Our brain is comfortable in our speaking range
 - It may resist the major variance need to sing, especially higher notes
 - If just can't seem to get close to "higher" notes
 - Start on a pitch in your comfort zone (one that you can match)
 - Sing up the scale (Do, Re, Mi, etc) until you reach the note you are attempting to match
 - Play the note again
 - Try to match without singing up the scale
 - If necessary, again start low and sing up the scale.
 - Match Pitch Exercise
 - Match the notes to *Happy Birthday* using the song sheet in your class folder or the "Exercises/Document" section of this site to identify the notes on your keyboard / pitch generation source
 - The letter designation of the notes are indicated on the song sheet
 - Other than the *National Anthem* (which nobody but Whitney Houston sings very well), this is probably the song you will sing most often.
 - When you have matched each of the notes try singing along with the audio version found in "Sing Along" section of the site