

Pacific Singers & Actors Workshop Singing Guide for Instructors

Postural alignment: emphasizing the need for a free neck in order to make good singing sounds

1. Demonstrate how to stretch the back of the neck with the palm of the hand; stretch for about 30 seconds. Have students gently drop their hands and feel like a bobblehead doll.
2. While continuing to stretch the neck have students check their shoulders over hips over knees over feet, making sure feet are appropriate distance apart
3. Have students find springy knees
4. Demonstrate “zombie jaw,” emphasizing importance of relaxed jaw during singing

Breath and support: introduction to inhale and exhale as a full breath cycle using a hiss for exhale

“Breathing is the foundation for singing and projecting the voice when speaking. Now we’re going to learn about how to exhale, or breathing out, for singing and speaking using primal sound. Primal sound is a result of connection emotion to our voices.”

- Have students put one hand on stomach, one hand on waist
 - Have them say, “Hey!” and then ask them what they felt
 - Answer: stomach went in, waist popped out; if they didn’t feel it the first time, have them repeat saying, “Hey!” until they do
 - Then have them observe their stomach and waist movement as they
 - Say, “Um hmm” as if they are agreeing with someone
 - Do a silent laugh/giggle
 - Say, “Whyyyyy?” in a whine
- Have students pulse a “snaky” hiss for 8 counts observing the stomach and waist movement they felt in their primal sound: Ss, ss, ss, ss, ss, ss...
- Explain that their exhale turns the snapshot of the pulsing hiss into a movie
- Have students hiss out on one long hiss for 8 counts observing the stomach and waist movement
- Have a competition to see who can hiss out the longest (they can take any inhale they like)
- Have students do a siren on [u] observing stomach and waist

“Now that you’ve learned what the body does during an exhale and while you’re making a primal sound, we’re going to learn about the inhale, or breathing in, for singing and stage speaking. Everyone put one hand on your back ribcage.”

NOTE: Give students each some hand sanitizer and allow time for it to dissipate.

- Inhale explained through finger vacuum - four (clean) fingers placed gently between the lips and breathe in on a four count and hiss out on an eight count, having students observe how the ribcage expands for the inhale

OR

- Inhale through an imaginary straw, having students observe how the ribcage expands for the inhale

“Did you feel your ribcage expand? We don’t need to breathe with a full inhale as we do normal things throughout the day, but we need a nice, full breath for singing and speaking on stage.”

- Have students put their hands gently around the neck with heels of hands forward; feel muscles when swallowing; now, don't use any of those muscles; keep hands there and take a silent breath and feel how those muscles are not engaged

Other breathing exercises:

- One-breath alphabet on a five-tone scale up and down to see if students can sing the entire alphabet in one exhale; grouped as the following:
a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h
i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p
q, r, s, t, u, v, w
X(1)-Y(5)-Z(1)
- Wall breathing (or floor if clean); students lean against a wall with legs slightly bent as if sitting in a chair; have them inhale, observing their backs expanding against the wall; then exhale on a hiss and repeat
- Who-can-hiss-out-longest competition

Warm up: simple five-tone scale vocal warm-ups focusing on using postural alignment and breath cycle

- Physical observation reminders:
 - Check in with your neck to see if it's free; bobble your head, then check your shoulders over your head over your knees over your feet
 - Check your zombie jaw
 - Instructions for physical observation: use one hand for vacuum breath (or not if using imaginary straw); other hand on waist; then vacuum-breath hand moves to stomach for singing/exhaling
- Breathing instructions before each exercise for the first few exercises:
 - Hiss out on a count of three, then inhale on one count (hiss, 2, 3, inhale while snapping fingers)

OR

- Vacuum breath for four counts while snapping fingers, then sing

Demonstrate the chosen breathing technique and the exercise.

- Start on the note A in key of D – go up and down from there
- Vacuum inhale on four counts then 5-4-3-2-1 on ha ha ha ha ha

OR

- Hiss out for three counts, inhale on one count, then 5-4-3-2-1 on ha ha ha ha ha
- Change vowel to “ooh,” “ee”
- Same thing; make ha ha ha a laugh, cry, whine, other primal sound
- Explain that ha ha ha ha ha warmup is staccato, which means short and disconnected vs. legato, which means smooth and connected, which is what we use to sing our songs
- Siren exercise to demonstrate legato: hiss out for three counts, inhale on one count, then have them sing “hoo” on 1-5 -1 (D-A-D) like a siren ; emphasize as the exercise goes higher that they need to drop their zombie jaws. Can change vowels to “ha,” and “hee”

Teach song by call and response with physical observation reminders

Vowel sound work

- Introduce vowel sounds by demonstrating with a word from the song; explain that vowel sounds are not how something is spelled but the sound we hear
- Explain that singing in tune and enunciation come from the dropped zombie jaw
- Explain diphthongs (two vowel sounds next to one another) using the words “I” and “my.” Say the words slowly and ask students to raise a hand if they know the first vowel sound. Say the words slowly again and ask students to raise a hand if they know the second vowel sound. Point out that the vowel sounds have nothing to do with the way the word is spelled. This lays the groundwork for later individual coachings.

After Week 1: Introduce the acting concept for that day into the singing warmup or use a physicalization to help create energy

Call out any of the following in between five-tone scales:

- Strike a pose
- State of Being
- Circles
- Call and response
- Two lines/groups of students moving towards one another

ARTICULATION EXERCISES

1) Start on one note and go up by half steps and speed up

The lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue.

The lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue.

Enunciate, articulate, exaggerate.

2) Mama made me mash my M&Ms – on five-tone scale up and down with one syllable per note

NOTE: During articulation exercises remind students of physical technique tools and, to not only enunciate consonants but also the vowel sounds coming from the dropped zombie jaw.