Posture and Breathing Mechanics

Singing well requires good breath control! Support for singing comes from the correct use of the diaphragm muscle. Being able to take a controlled breath in will allow you to sing longer phrases of music and help to support your overall volume.

Your posture is key to being able to breath properly from the diaphragm. Your postures also helps to keep your resonate areas; such the chest, neck, mouth, and head relaxed and open.

Standing Posture

When standing, your posture is to be tall and even. Do not allow your chest cavity to collapse inward as seen the first example (ex. 1). You also do not want to overextend your chest outward as in the second example (ex.2). Your weight should be evenly distributed between both legs and your back and neck in perfect alignment like example 3.

Sitting Posture

When sitting, your posture is to remain tall and even. Your back and neck should be in a neutral position with your feet flat to the floor. In example 1, the back is too curved and will not allow you to breath fully. If example 3 the back is overextended and chest is too far out. This will cause tension and strain of your voice. Example 2 is the proper sitting posture for singing.

Vocal Production Reminders

The following are some reminders about proper vocal production. Review each of the points and then complete the Vocal Production and Breathing Mechanics quiz.

There are 4 physical elements used in proper vocal production

1. The Actuator - breathing muscles
2. The Vocal Cords - where sound is produced
3. The Resonator - where sound resonates
4. The Articulators - controls vowels/consonants and tone quality
The **Actuator** - breathing
The diaphragm is the muscle used to help support your breath control. When you use your diaphragm you are able to control how quickly or slowly air is released. Using the diaphragm muscle also allows you to take a more controlled and deeper breath. Singing from your diaphragm will also help you to sing louder, higher or lower, as well as protect your voice from unnecessary damage.

The **Vocal Cords** - sound
Your vocal cords are two thin muscles that when air passes through them they will vibrate to create sound. The thinner and more stretched your vocal cord, the higher the pitch. The thicker and relaxed they vocal cords are the lower the pitch will sound. REMEMBER, to reduce strain on your vocal cords, you must not have tension on your chest, neck, or throat area. Added strain in those area will cause your vocal cords to not work properly.

The **Resonator** - space
The ability for sound to travel is based on the space it has to resonate. As a singer you have to allow for these areas; your chest cavity, neck/throat, mouth, and head to be open and free from anything that will block your voices’ ability to allow the sound to come out. Being able to relax and open these spaces through proper posture and adjustment of your mouth and nasal cavity will help to create the proper place for your sound to resonate.

The **Articulators** - clarity
Your ability to sing on vowels and to articulate (or pronounce) consonants is key to a singer’s success. Using the tongue, lips, teeth, and soft/hard palates, and jaw you can help to create the right open spaces to sing in while articulating and understanding your lyrics.

Breathing from the diaphragm

Resonators and Articulators
Another important factor of singing is to keep yourself and your voice healthy. The following are 8 tips you can do daily to keep your voice in good working condition for class!

1. Hydration- keeping yourself and your vocal cords hydrated by drinking lots of water throughout the day is one way to keep your voice healthy. Water is always best and drinks full of caffeine are NOT good for your vocal cords. Caffeine will dry out your vocal cords, doing the opposite of what is needed for your voice.

2. Vocal Naps- Allow yourself “vocal naps” throughout the day. Finding time for your vocal cords to rest throughout the day will help them to rejuvenate, just like our bodies need to rest for the next day.

3. Throat Clearing and Harsh Coughing- Throat clearing and harsh coughing can be very traumatic to your vocal cords and should be reduced as much as possible. One way to help clear your throat can be water, or to produce a sharp, silent “H” sound while you expel the air.

4. Vocal abuse- Don’t abuse or misuse your voice by yelling, screaming, or talking too loudly in noisy areas. If you feel like your throat is tired, it probably is from over or misuse. Hoarseness is a warning sign that your vocal cords are irritated.

5. Stay relaxed - Keep your throat and neck relaxed when singing high notes and low notes. Straining your head or neck only causes more tension in the throat area and will make it difficult to sing.

6. Medications- At certains times, medications can have an effect on your vocal cords. Some medications will dry out the vocal cords or maybe place strain in the voice box area. If possible, use water and hydration as one way to combat the effects of medications.

7. Speaking- Watch how you speak every day. Skilled singers can still do harm to their voices if they misuse use the voice while speaking. If you have to speak louder, use more air from the diaphragm to help support and cushion your vocal cords.

8. Keep your body healthy - Keeping yourself healthy with rest and diet will help you to keep your voice from being strained. Our vocal cords are a part of the body and when a part of our body isn’t feeling well it can affect the whole body. Get your sleep and eat a well balanced meal that will help your entire body to maintain itself.