

## GET RESULTS: VOCAL PEDAGOGY TIPS THAT WORK

Any style, any voice, any age or experience level – practical, easy, powerful

My background, niche/students

Questions for FHMTA: How many sessions do you get with the student? Type of music? Goal?

Lesson focus: must be take-aways, student knows what needs work and how to make it better

My approach:

1. Diction-based, pitch does not determine how you pronounce the lyrics
2. Grounded in classical training and practical experience (teaching and singing)
3. Builds voice into all it can be – head, chest, blend rather than one sound
4. Works for any musical style
5. Variety of colors, tone and effects are all a choice
6. Empowers students

Basics:

1. Shoulders down, eliminates shallow breathing
2. Breathe through mouth, not nose
3. All consonants light and crisp
4. First note is what you keep
5. Words start mouth level, toss up, never placed on a note
6. Do not reach for pitches, launch vowels beyond where you think the note is
7. Jaw hangs in place naturally
8. Mouth small, not spread, opens in back
9. Trust it, throw all caution to the wind
10. Live in the moment, give it your best effort, do not analyze while you're singing
11. What you think about is what you will do

**Warm-ups:** 10-15 minutes before working on song, focus on pure technique, optimize results

1. Most vocalizes for female singers start in middle C position, male singers start on bass C
2. Lip rolls: 5 finger pattern, arpeggio, I-V7 arpeggio, octave +9<sup>th</sup>, substitute tongue rolls (completely relax face)
3. Staccato descending
4. Legato descending, ascending
5. Pure head: descending, ascending on u or lu, staccato, beautiful
6. Pure chest: descending, bright vowels, nasty, do not take above F
7. Strong blend: footlights, na or nah, gotta be strong
8. Children: bibbidi bobbidi, supercalifrag, ice cream, cookies & presents
9. Classical: heart face, vibrato, pure legato, 1-5-1 (expand sideways/get "fat"), 1-5 cresc/descend fast 4321, classical chest, rich blend
10. Belt: alternate classical and belt vowels on repeated notes – "ew" vowels

Common problems/antidotes:

1. Breathy/no focus or volume, thin sound (**Tomorrow**)
  - a. **Needs nasal resonance**, may be hiss from throat or push forward
  - b. Think pure tone, commit
  - c. **Launch every word, finger flick, voice will follow**
  - d. **Do not anticipate diphthong or ending consonants**
  - e. **Na or nah for high notes, scrunch nose/snarl for low notes**

2. Too nasal (**Till There Was You**)
  - a. Back up point of resonance, middle of head for balanced tone
  - b. Usually place first note, throws it forward toward nose, facial tension apparent**
  - c. Pronounce words, toss toward crown**
3. Throat singer – too much chest (**Cabaret**)
  - a. Starts everything in throat, little support so throat takes over, reaches for notes
  - b. Usually spread mouth, makes it even tighter, flat**
  - c. Needs space, more head in the blend**
  - d. Lighten up, stretch inside
  - e. Let it go to find it, strength will double
4. Head voice singer – too much head (**Where Is Love?**)
  - a. Lack of tone in lower mid-range, low notes**
  - b. Usually place low notes rather than tossing words for a natural sound**
  - c. Vocalize starting on middle C or lower
5. Afraid of notes – focusing on pitches, everyone to some degree
  - a. Throw all caution to the wind, sing with abandon
  - b. Trust your technique, let it work for you
  - c. Figure eight for flow of line (Favorite Things)**
  - d. Speed up difficult passages, gradually slow down to performance tempo (16->17)**
  - e. Low to high – start light so top will pop, start with space for the top (Do-Re-Mi)**
  - f. Long notes – keep adding intensity, think of a rainbow (Do-Re-Mi)**
  - g. Words that start with a vowel – start small, move fast to eliminate glottal stop (I Won't Grow Up)**
6. Modified vowels – chewing words
  - a. Many times diphthongs are to blame (I Could Have Danced All Night)**
  - b. If not, student is trying to get space on underside of the breath by dropping jaw, cupping tongue (Think of Me)**
  - c. Tongue and jaw are working as a team instead of tongue working independently like it should
7. Straight tone vs vibrato
  - a. **Pop:** straight tone, throat holds box, must be amplified (**Colors of the Wind**)
  - b. Classical:** box drops down a level and relaxes, rocks gently back and forth (**Nightingale**)
  - c. Can't "make" it happen, "let" it happen – straight tone may not have sufficient support
  - d. Exercise: alternate half step pattern (same for trill), same way we teach trill on piano**
8. Male voices
  - a. Must work head too
  - b. Lighten up at top of blend, channel (corners in)

Song approach:

1. Circle important words before practicing the song
  - a. Practice lines like script, must be spoken out loud to choose the right ones
  - b. They get more lift and float when sung
  - c. Not influenced by pitch
2. Stage presence – keep in mind movement eases performance anxiety, must come out of lyrics
  - a. Don't be afraid to hold a move, transition to the next**
  - b. Facial expression vital, especially eyes
  - c. Look slightly up, focus eyes to focus your voice

Wrap Up: thank you, practical insights/solutions, feel free to get in touch - cards