



national foundation for
youth music

www.youthmusic.org.uk



getting ready to sing

Why warm up?

Just as an athlete warms up their body before a race, singers need to prepare themselves to use their voices safely and effectively. After all, singing involves our whole body, not just the part above the neck!

Warm-ups should take up to 25% of each singing session. You can establish a fun and familiar routine, everyone will enjoy repeating their favourite warm-ups and incorporating new ones from time to time. This will also help to reinforce a group identity.

An effective warm-up offers a good balance of exercises incorporating both vigorous movement and focussed stillness. So here are some ideas to help you encourage your group to get ready to sing: Keep the pace up!

Explain As you do each warm-up explain what it is for, then you will be giving your group the tools to improve their singing.

Experiment Find out what works for you and your group. Develop ideas among yourselves and then go to the Youth Music website to share your ideas with others and to discover more exercises.



Listen to the CD A collection of exercises are demonstrated on the accompanying CD and you'll find it's fun to have your group sing along. These exercises do not constitute a total warm-up but have been chosen because it is often easier to learn from hearing them than having them described.



Have Fun! Everyone gives more and sings 'better' when they are having fun.

Why Do It?

- To clear unwanted tensions
- To wake up!
- To focus attention
- To understand, the importance of both movement and stillness in singing
- To raise energy levels
- To focus energy

Activities to try

Stand with feet hip-width apart, then, as you breathe in clench every muscle. Start from the toes and move gradually upwards until every part of the body is stiff. Hold it!
Breathe out and relax

Shake out your arms and legs, wobble your knees and give your hips a wiggle

Slap yourselves all over

If you have enough room and want something more vigorous...

Run around the space - jumping, skipping, jogging - and then on the spot until everyone is breathless

STOP! Stand still with closed eyes

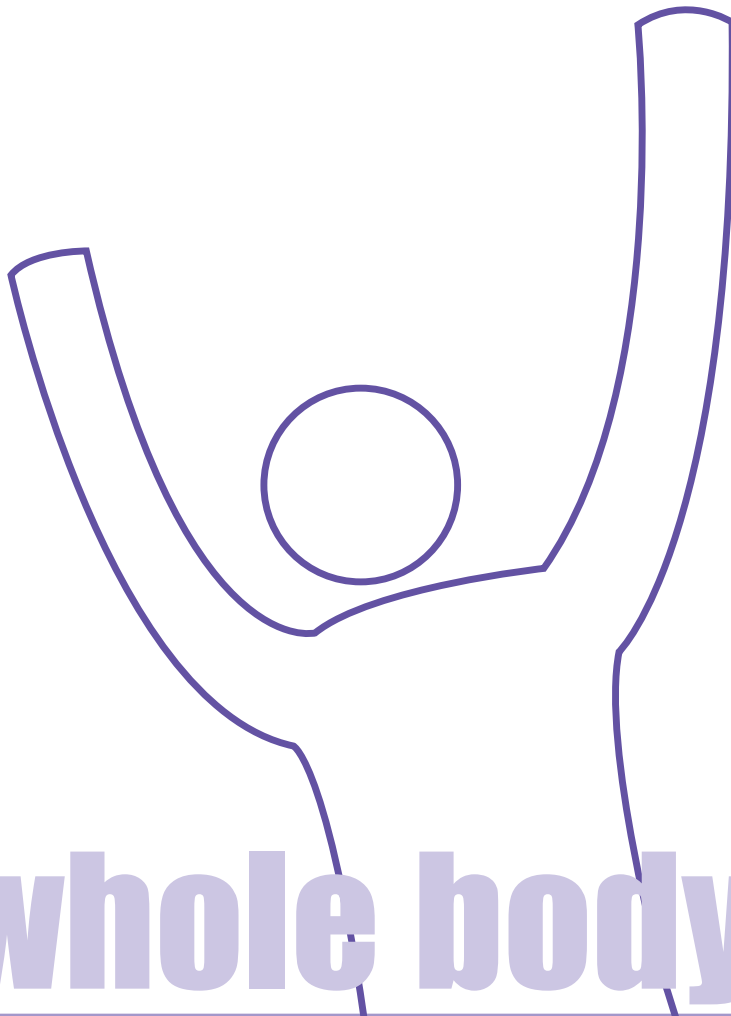
Watch! Observe the body as it's breathing gradually returns to a normal rate. Notice that the body can breathe most effectively all by itself - just let it!

Listen! Once the breath returns to normal how many sounds can you hear outside this room? Inside the room? Inside the body?

Energy Punch - Find a space with enough room to freely swing your arms. Stand with your knees slightly bent and feet wider than usual -the centre of gravity needs to be low. Breathe in. As the breath is released throw a punch straight out in front of you. Immediately follow this by another using your other hand, then follow it immediately by another with the first hand. Do lots of these punches in quick succession with a small exerted out breath on each punch. *The punch must come straight out from the shoulder, which remains loose, and keep the chest-box free. Avoid 'crossing' the punches, as in boxing, as this closes up the posture and tightens the shoulders*

Energy Kick - you need a similar low centre and more focus on your physical balance. Breathe in. As you breathe out kick one leg, high and straight out in front of you. Aim for the heel to 'hit the target' then STAMP that foot down and immediately kick the other leg out. Continue this 'Kick-Stamp-Kick-Stamp' for a minute or so, again exerting short bursts of breath with each kick.

Concentrate on keeping the centre of gravity low and still. Try punching and kicking at the same time, varying rhythms for the punches



whole body

- To increase awareness of posture
Posture should be erect, but relaxed. Be careful to avoid raised shoulders or locked knees

Stretch your arms above your head and move your shoulders up until they touch your ears then move them back to as low a position as you can

Flop down like a rag doll; rest there with your head hanging loose. Breathe in. As you breathe out gradually straighten your back, starting from the lowest part of your spine until you are standing tall and proud

Imagine your feet are the roots of a tree planted firmly in the ground. Make your body sway gently like a tree in the wind until you have found your central point of balance



posture

- To correctly align the head so you improve the sound
- To improve resonance
- To loosen the lower jaw
- Expressing and communicating emotions

Gently move your head from side to side, up and down

Massage your face especially from the temples down to the jaw hinges

Screw up your face, hold it, then relax

Open up the face, stretch the eyes wide open, then open the mouth wide and stick out the tongue. Say 'Bleeeeeeeeeaaaaarrrrrh!' a few times

Close up and tighten all areas of the face, and then open again, close, open etc. Feelings come from deep inside and can be seen through the eyes, face and the body. How could you express, for example, 'proud', 'sad', 'angry' or 'hopeful' to enhance singing?

head and face

- To open up the chest and let air enter the body
- To encourage low breathing
- To build stamina
- To control the breath
It is important when you are singing that although you are breathing deeply you do not hear the intake of breath

Yawn and stretch as though you have just woken up

Drink a 'pint' of cold air, feel the cold air on the back of your throat

Breathe in deeply to a slow count of 4, hold the breath for 2 counts and then breathe out slowly for 4 counts making a shhh sound. CD track 7. Try again, but breathe out to 8 counts CD track 8 and again and breathe out to 12 counts CD track 9

Hum with the lips lightly touching on any note, only change your note when you run out of breath

breathing

- To bring the voice forward
- To Extend range up and down

voice stretchers

Swoop! Put your voice on a 'roller coaster'! Follow the hand signals of the leader, making your voice rise and fall with the movements of the 'ride'. Make sure you are watching carefully so that when the leader's hand stops suddenly, your voice does too.



Buzzing - sing a 'zah, zah zah zah zummmm' pattern up scale. CD track 10

Mooring - open out with the vowels and consonants of 'mee mae mah moh...mooo' in a descending pattern down the scale. CD track 11

- To get the facial muscles working
- To improve diction
- To encourage clarity

The singers should think about the use of "the teeth, the lips and the tip of the tongue" during all these exercises

Wake up the tip of the tongue with a descending pattern nee, nae, noo, nah nee, nee, nee...CD track 12

Collect tongue twisters

Whisper them making the words look big on your face

Choose a tongue-twister like –

- Freddy fries his fish on Fridays.

Practice saying it clearly, analysing how the mouth forms each word

Sing the whole phrase on a single lowish note, then move up the scale, taking a breath after each pair of repetitions

Sing the William Tell tune to one of these phrases.

- Bite a Bun! CD track 13
- Wear a Wig! CD track 14
- Touch your Toes!

Sing down the scale with

- Fluffy Floppy Puppy CD track 15
- Giggly goggles

articulation

- To improve the sound of the group by making the same vowel sounds

The mouth should have a 'yawny' feel

unified vowels

Choose a note and try these words:

- Do you chew blue glue?
- Ah! There's pa's car

Work on the shape of the mouth

For '**oo**', put lips round your finger and take finger out

For '**aah**', tongue should be resting against back of lower teeth

For '**ee**' make a wide space in the throat and feel air on the back of the roof of the mouth Try '**ooing**' and '**eeing**' on a broken chord. CD track 16

- To get the feeling of syncopation in the body

Step together from one side to another. Establish a rhythm and then clap in between each step - Step-Clap-Step-Clap. Sing something that fits the rhythm like Zum! Zum! CD track 18

Establish a 4 beat count by stepping on each beat, continue stepping on 1,2, 3 and...

Call out 'Ho!' on the last beat, whilst flinging your arms to the ceiling, 1.2.3.Ho! 1.2.3.Ho! etc CD track 19

Then try a 3 beat count, stepping on the first two beats, calling out 'Ha!' on beat 3 and...

Fling the arms straight forward: 1. 2.Ha! 1.2. 'Ha!' etc. CD track 20

Divide the group with one group doing 1.2.3. 'Ho!' and the other 1.2. 'Ha!' CD track 21

Encourage the use of a low breathy sound on the 'Ho' and 'Ha' to avoid shouting

rhythm



This symbol denotes that the information in the section can be found on the website www.youthmusic.org.uk



This symbol denotes the use of the cd

Adapting your warm-ups

After a selection of general warm-ups, devise some more that relate directly to the song you are working on

Pick out the more challenging areas and tackle them head-on by turning them into exercises. Here are some suggestions for 'Drop in the Ocean' to start you off

- drop drop drop

On the out-breath make a 'shhhhhh' sound and get louder and get softer like the waves Breathe in through your nose and whisper 4 'drops' in one go. Try and increase it to 8 in one go...can you manage 12?

breathing

- Each drop runs down

voice stretchers

Starting on C above middle C use the phrase 'each drop runs down' CD track 22 Then take away the consonants and try with vowels only, making the line as smooth as possible. Make sure the sound quality is maintained right the way down the scale

- I'm a drop in the ocean

Make a difference between the staccato Chorus of 'I'm a drop' and the legato 'in the ocean'. Divide the group into 2. One half sings the jagged 'I'm a drop', the other half reply, as smoothly as possible, with 'in the ocean'. Prepare the sound in your head before you sing the staccato notes so that they are in tune. Swap the parts over



articulation

- Use the coda (letter I)

Practice singing 'the ocean' as quietly as possible. Take a good breath in between each phrase. Get quieter and quieter

Practice singing the vowels in 'Slowly roll over the ocean' CD track 17

unified vowels

(e.g. "join together every nation" bar 110-112)

- The chorus (letter C)

If any rhythms seem tricky, chant them and move to them, punching the air or stepping on each syllable. Clap the rhythm and speak the words. CD track 23

You could try singing the chorus of the song over the step/clapping exercise. Try it with the clap off the beat as well as on the beat, for an energetic gospel atmosphere

rhythm

Congratulations!
You are now ready
to give yourself to
the song