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VOCAL TECHNIQUE FOR BEGINNERS:

10 Steps to Becoming a Better Singer

Vocal Technique for Beginners:

10 Steps to Becoming A Better Singer

Hi, my name is Matt Ramsey and I'm the founder and head voice teacher at [Ramsey Voice Studio](#), the highest rated vocal studio in Texas. Thanks for downloading this guide!

As a voice teacher, I can tell you that almost everyone wants to learn to sing. I mean who doesn't want to stroll onstage and blow everyone away with their voice? But lots of people wonder whether you can really learn to sing, or if you're just born with it.

After teaching over 500 students, I can tell you: **Anyone can learn to sing**. It doesn't matter if you've been told you're tone deaf, I promise that you can learn to sing. It just takes practice and the right singing techniques.

Now don't get me wrong: **Becoming a great singer takes work**. A lot of it. And some people learn quicker than others. But learning good breath support, vocal tone, and how to hit high notes takes practice just like anything else. And like any other skill, there are lots of ways to learn; there are [private voice lessons](#), [online singing lessons](#) and [YouTube videos](#).

Private lessons are the best way to improve your voice (since they're focused on your voice in particular), but if you're just starting out, there are lots of things you can do on your own to improve your singing. So if you've always wanted to sing but aren't sure where to start, follow the steps in this guide. I'll show you my ten favorite vocal techniques and break them down into easy-to-follow steps so you can practice along at home.

Before we jump in, however, it pays to understand what vocal technique actually is and how it can help you. So here's what you need to know.

What is “Vocal Technique” Anyway?

Almost every student that comes to my studio tells me they want to learn vocal technique. And that’s kind of funny because very few singers know what vocal technique actually *is*.

Some people think it means exercises. Others think it means learning breath control. And while those are both examples of vocal techniques, here’s my take: **A vocal technique is any tool that you use to sing something better, easier, and more effectively.**

That’s all vocal technique is: **a tool you use to sing better.**

And over the years I’ve been teaching, I’ve noticed that some vocal techniques work better than others. So I want to help you find the quickest, most effective route to improving your singing. But before we jump into the exercises, I want to give you a quick primer on how to take care of your voice.

Read This Before You Start Singing

Here’s the bottom line: **If you’re drinking, smoking, and screaming yourself hoarse every night, no amount of vocal technique in the world can help you.**

That’s because as a singer, your instrument is inside your body. And your vocal cords are flesh and blood like anything else. So if you don’t use your voice correctly, it can get tired, strained, or damaged. That’s why it pays to know how to take care of your voice.

Here are some golden rules to keep your voice healthy:

Don’t Smoke

This may sound obvious, but smoking is bad for your singing. Not only will smoking reduce your breath capacity, but it will also dry out your vocal cords. And since the vocal cords require hydration to vibrate correctly, you want to make sure they’re not getting too dried out.

Drink Lots of Water

As I explained, your vocal cords need a lot of hydration to vibrate correctly. And drinking water can also help clear away mucus and other stuff on your vocal cords that can ruin your vocal tone. So you should drink about 2 liters of water a day, or about eight 8-ounce glasses.

Get Good Rest

There’s no substitute for good rest when it comes to singing well. Not only will good rest give your voice time to recover, but you’ll also be able to focus more on your voice.

Just think about it: When you’re tired it’s way more difficult to learn new tasks. So if you’re not rested, your brain will automatically focus more on keeping all the important systems online. And unfortunately, singing well isn’t really a priority compared to keeping you alive.

Avoid Foods That Give You Reflux or Allergies

I’ve seen some singers whose voices are completely transformed when they change their diet.

That's because the food that we eat affects our bodies a lot. But the food we eat also affects our voices.

Unfortunately, many of us eat foods that encourage acid reflux or food allergies. In either case, when you eat foods that trigger a reaction, your throat secretes more mucus to protect itself. But that extra mucus makes it way harder to sing well. So if you want to sound your best when you sing, start by avoiding [these foods](#).

Have a Healthy Voice

If your voice isn't healthy, vocal technique won't help you.

So if you have a cold, acid reflux, or even nodules, it's important to get yourself healthy first.

For more serious problems like nodules, polyps, or vocal hemorrhage, you should see an ENT (ear, nose and throat doctor) to start a treatment plan before you sing. Then, once your voice is healthy again, you'll be amazed at how much more quickly you progress.

Now that that's out of the way, here are the ten best vocal techniques for helping you sing better...

Vocal Technique #1: The Vocal Warm Up

There's no getting around it: **Vocal warm ups are the weirdest part of learning how to sing.**

From lip trills, to "Gee"s and "Nay"s, vocal warm ups sound totally silly. But it's for good reason!

The truth is that when you're first learning how to sing, singing songs is one of the hardest things to do. That's because in songs, the melody, vowels, consonants, and volumes are changing all the time. So when you're learning good vocal techniques, it's good to start with vocal warm ups where something is staying the same.

For instance, you may do a warm up where you sing the word "Gee" across your whole range. In that case, the "Gee" is staying the same even while the notes change. Vocal warm ups can help you expand your range, hit higher notes, and gain more control. That way you can do it in songs too.

Another important reason to warm up is to get more blood flowing to your vocal cords and thin any extra mucus on the vocal cords. So, I'm going to show you my absolute favorite warm up.

A Very Simple Way to Warm Up Your Voice:

1. **Blow out some air to make your lips flop together.** They should vibrate together in a car or motorboat sound. *(See Fig. A for visual.)*
2. Once you've gotten the lips vibrating together, **begin to say the word "Uh"** (as in "Other").
3. Next, **find a comfortable note at the bottom of your voice** (try C3 for men and G3 for women) and sing that note on the "Uh" sound through the flopping lips.

4. Finally, **sing an octave and a half scale** where you let the lips buzz smoothly from the lowest note to the highest note and back down.

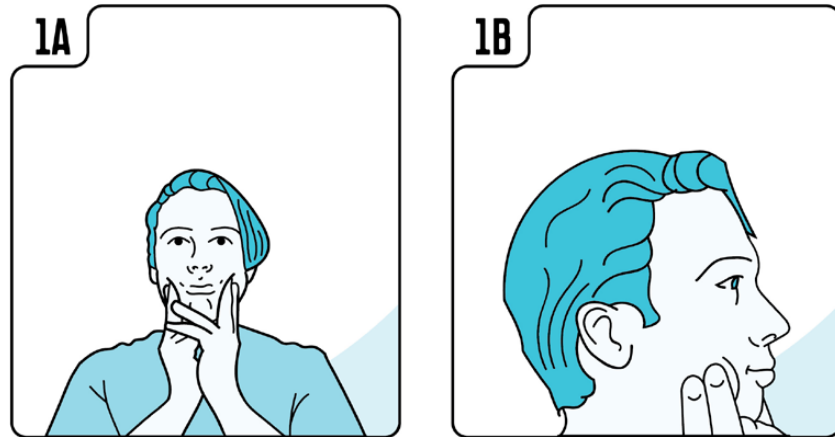


Figure A – Vocal Warmup

[Here's a video](#) where I walk you through the exercise.

As you're singing through the scale, try to keep the lips buzzing as evenly as possible. This will help you find a really smooth sound from the bottom to the top of your voice. You'll be amazed at how much better you can sing after doing this simple warm up!

Vocal Technique #2: Posture

Fixing your posture is one of the easiest ways to improve your singing. That's because many singers slouch or hold tension in their body when they sing. But this tension can make it more difficult to sing well.

So now that you're warmed up, let's fix your posture.

Here's what you need to know: The correct posture for singing is called the tall posture. That's because when you do it correctly, your body is upright and "tall" without being tense or rigid. So if you've noticed that you slouch a bit when you sing, start by finding the tall posture.

See Figure B on next page for visual walkthrough.

How to optimize your body for singing:

1. **Stand up and spread your feet** so that they're about shoulder width apart.
2. Next, **bring your hips in line** with your feet and shoulders so your whole body is in alignment.
3. Finally, **keep your chest lifted comfortably** and make sure that you're keeping your gaze directly forward.

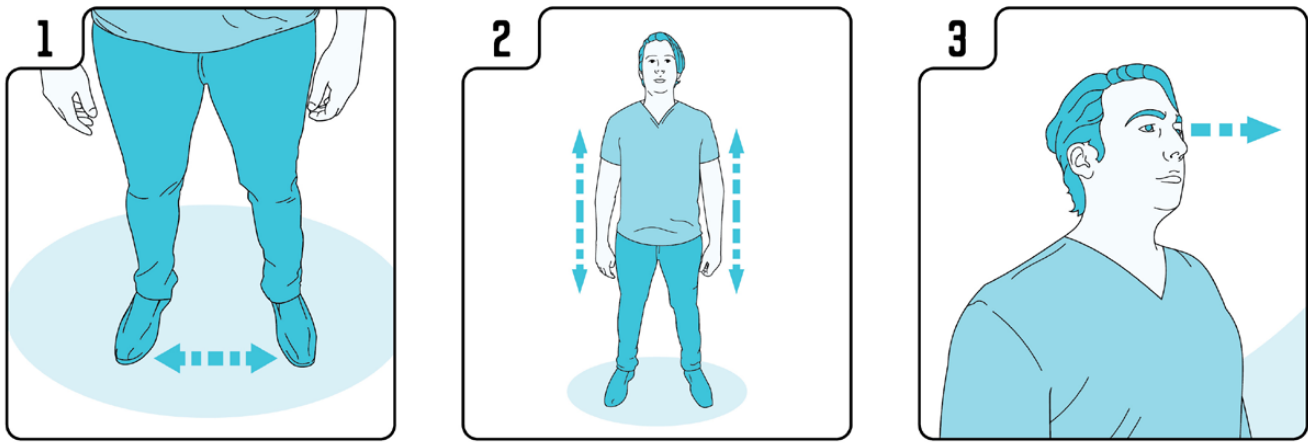


Figure B – Posture

You should feel that you're really grounded in this posture and that you can move freely and easily. With this simple change, you'll be amazed at how much better your voice sounds.

Vocal Technique #3: Breathing

To sing well, you need to learn to breathe correctly. That's because many singers breathe too shallowly when they sing. Luckily, learning to breathe correctly is really easy.

Here's what you need to know: **The correct breath for singing is called the *diaphragmatic breath*.** Breathing from the diaphragm simply means that when you inhale, you're contracting the diaphragm fully. Your lungs will fill with air and your stomach will come out. Then when you exhale, the diaphragm relaxes and your stomach will come back in.

So if you've noticed that you're running out of breath or vocal stamina when you sing, start by singing from the diaphragm.

See Figure C on next page for visual walkthrough.

One Exercise to Dramatically Increase Your Breath Control:

1. Stand in front of a mirror so you can see your body from the waist up, and then turn to the side.
2. Next, place your hands around the bottom of your stomach and inhale so that your stomach comes out as you breathe in. Do this without raising your chest or shoulders!
3. Finally, exhale so that your stomach comes back in as you breathe out. Again, make sure that you're not moving your chest or shoulders as you do this.

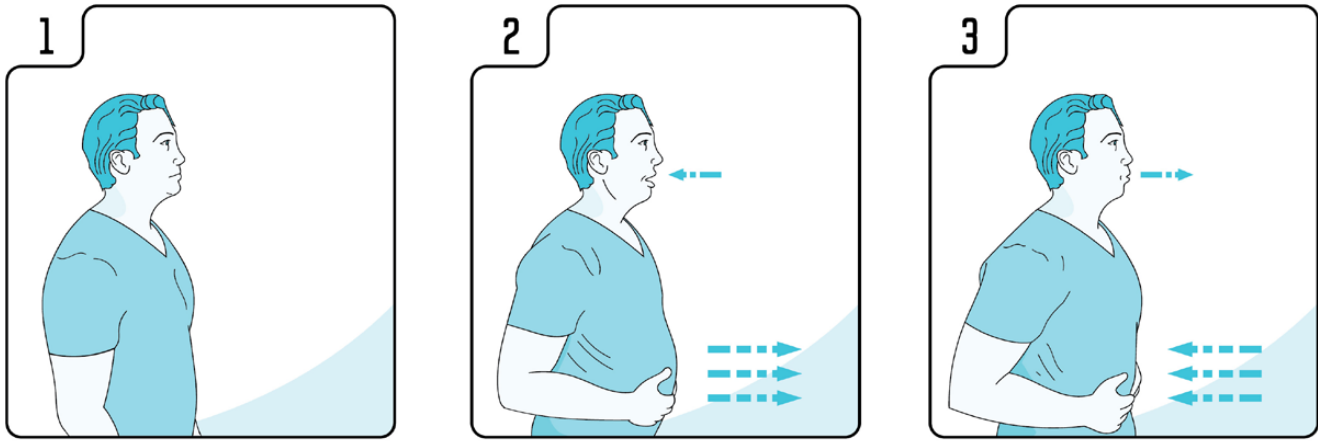


Figure C – Breathing

Now, breathing this way may feel very strange to you at first. But I promise if you practice this exercise for just a few minutes a day, you'll be amazed how much more vocal power you have!

Vocal Technique #4: Vocal Range

Here's the ugly truth: **You need to know where your weak spots are as a vocalist.**

But I'm not saying this to be mean! There's actually a good reason to find the weak spots in your voice: If you know where you weak spots are, you know what you need to work on.

So to improve your singing voice, you need to find your vocal range. Finding your vocal range has a lot of benefits. It will help you pick songs that are best suited for your voice, find your voice type, and help you measure your progress in vocal training.

But finding your vocal range will also tell you where your weak spots are.

So what is vocal range and how do you find it?

Vocal range is the measurement of distance from your lowest to your highest note. It's usually written as two letters with numbers after them. For example, C3-C5 is a common vocal range for men. And A3-A5 is a common vocal range for women.

The letter refers to the note that you're singing and the number refers to which octave you're singing in. So a C3 would be a "C" note in the 3rd octave. And a C5 would be a "C" note in the 5th octave.

That means if your vocal range is C3-C5, you can sing from a C in the 3rd octave up to a C in the 5th octave and all the notes in between. Make sense?

So now that you understand your vocal range, here's my favorite exercise to find it in your voice.

See Figure D on next page for visual walkthrough.

How to find your vocal range:

1. Go to a piano and find Middle C (also known as C4) and sing the note on an “Ah.”
2. Next, play each key moving downward from Middle C until you hit your lowest note.
3. Mark the lowest note you can sing.
4. Find Middle C again and now sing upwards until you’re at your highest note.
5. Then mark the highest note you can sing.
6. Now that you have the lowest and highest notes, write it out like this:
Lowest Note (with octave number) – Highest Note (with octave number)

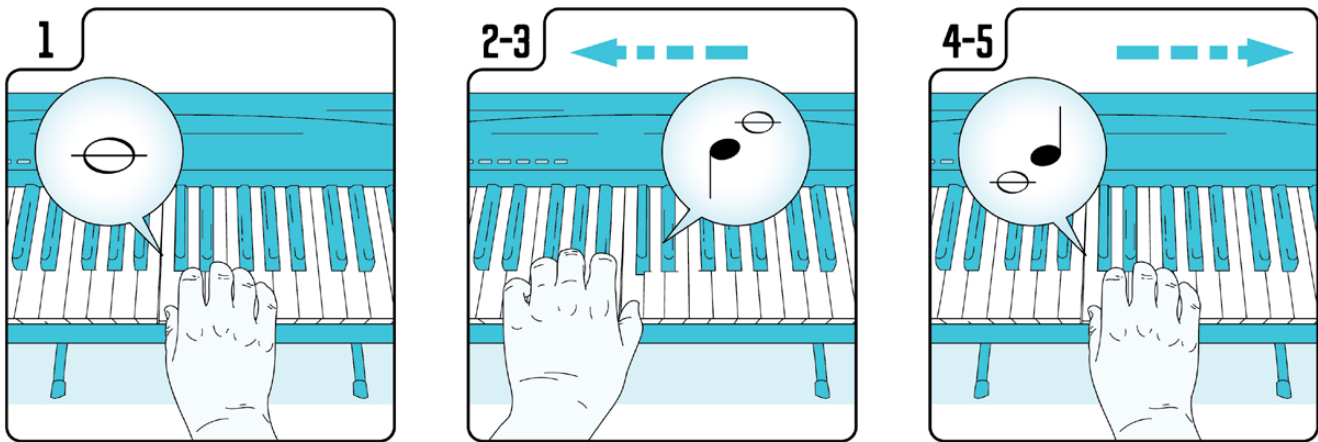


Figure D – Finding Vocal Range

That's it!

Don't worry if you feel your voice break or flip on a certain note. Just take note of where your break is and keep singing past it even if it's in a breathy falsetto. Now that you know the lowest, highest and break notes in your voice, you'll be able to know exactly which parts of your voice to work on.

Vocal Technique #5: Vocal Tone

Most singers need to improve their vocal tone. From being too breathy to being too nasally, vocal tone is something that a lot of singers struggle with. But now that you're warmed up and you know your vocal range, it's time to improve your vocal tone as well. Luckily, singing with good vocal tone is really easy to do.

The best way to improve your vocal tone is to use a speaking tone when you sing.

What does that mean? Well, when we speak, most of the time we don't speak too breathy or nasally because our intention is to communicate with people. But when we sing, we often change our voices to

sound a certain way. And sometimes that makes us too breathy or nasal.

So one easy way to improve your vocal tone is to “speak-sing” the notes a little more. Here’s my favorite exercise for how to do it.

Improve your vocal tone with this simple exercise:

1. Say the number “one” out loud at a comfortable volume.
2. Now find a comfortable note at the bottom of your voice (try C3 for men and G3 for women) and sing the word “one” on that pitch. Try to keep the same power in your voice as when you speak the word.
3. Finally, sing the numbers 1 through 5 on a 5-Tone scale, making sure to keep each note strong.



Figure E – Vocal Tone

[Here's a video](#) where I walk you through how to do the exercise.

Remember, the whole point of this exercise is to apply the tone of your speaking voice to your singing voice. So as you’re singing through the exercise, try to keep all the notes very “spoken” feeling. You’ll be amazed at how this simple exercise makes your notes sound so much richer.



Vocal Technique #6: Projecting

If you want to sing in a larger venue than your room, you need to learn to project your voice. The truth is that learning to project is one of the most important skills to learn as a performing singer. That's because if you're going to perform on stage, you need to be able to reach every person in the room without hurting yourself.

Unfortunately, many singers think that projecting just means yelling. But yelling will strain your voice! So if you dream of singing to large audiences, here's the best way to learn to project.

Reach your audience by projecting your voice:

1. Take a phrase from a song that you want to sing stronger.
2. Next, say the words of the phrase out loud like you're on stage and you need to reach the back row of the audience. Find this strong volume without whispering or yelling.
3. Finally, go back to the lyrics and "speak-sing" the words on pitch with the same feeling that you just spoke them.

It's important to make sure that you're singing at the right volume with this exercise. You want to project so that you're not yelling or whispering. When you do these vocal exercises correctly, you'll be amazed at how much stronger your voice gets while still being relaxed.

Vocal Technique #7: Singing Low Notes

Learning to sing low notes well is one of the best ways to improve your singing voice. But it's not just so you can sing Johnny Cash songs. Learning to sing low notes is important because the low notes are a foundation for all your higher notes. Just think about it: If your low notes are breathy and light, what's going to happen when you sing up higher? Your voice will be so quiet and breathy, no one will be able to hear you.

So before we jump into singing high notes, make sure the notes at the bottom of your voice are strong first. Working on your low notes will also help you sing in tune better.

Old school Italian singing teachers found that when they sang low notes, they felt a vibration in their chest. So they called this range of notes chest voice.

You can see this for yourself: place your hand on your chest and say your name out loud at a strong volume. Feel that vibration? That's chest voice.

We now know that singing with chest voice is the key to singing low notes well. But singing with chest voice is also really important for hitting high notes. So if you feel that you may be a bit breathy on the

bottom of your voice, it's time to strengthen your chest voice.

Improve your low notes with this simple exercise:

1. Place your hand on your chest and say the word “Gug” (as in “Gutter”) at a loud volume. If you say it at the correct volume, you’ll probably feel a vibration against your hand.
2. Next, find a comfortable note at the bottom of your voice (try C3 for men and G3 for women) and sing the word “Gug” on that note with the same strength as you spoke it.
3. Finally, sing the “Gug” on a 5-Tone scale like I demonstrate [in this video](#).



Figure F – Singing Low Notes

You should feel the strong vibration in your chest each time that you sing the “Gug” exercise. If you do this exercise right, you’ll be amazed at how much stronger your low notes feel. And that leads us to great high notes!



Vocal Technique #8: Singing High Notes

Who are we kidding? **Singing high notes is the coolest part of learning to sing.**

Who doesn't love the sound of a great singer hitting crazy high notes? So now that the bottom of your voice is more solid, I want to show you how to hit high notes.

Old school Italian singing teachers found that when they sang higher notes, they felt a vibration in their head. So they called this range of notes head voice.

You can see this for yourself: place your hand on the back of your

neck and sing a “Wee” (as in “week”) on a really high note. Feel that vibration? That’s head voice.

We now know that head voice is the key to hitting high notes. So if you’ve been having a hard time singing higher, it’s time to find your head voice. Here’s one of my favorite exercises for singing in head voice.

Hit Crazy High Notes With This Exercise:

1. **Say the word “Wee”** (like “week”) out loud at a normal volume. Try to keep the sound very easy and relaxed like a kid on a playground saying “Weeeee.”
2. **Find a comfortable starting pitch** (try C3 for guys and G3 for girls), and sing the word “Wee” on this pitch, keeping the tone very relaxed and easy.
3. **Sing an octave and a half scale** where you replace each note of the scale with the “Wee.”

If you feel that your voice breaks through the exercise, don’t worry. Just keep singing from the bottom to the top and through the break in your voice each time. You’ll be amazed at how much higher you can sing when you let your voice go from low to high.

Vocal Technique #9: Sing with Mixed Voice

The “Wee” exercise is great for singing in head voice, but it’s not very good at helping you sing more powerfully. So now that you’ve found the top part of your voice, it’s time to build some more power into those notes. **The best way to sing high notes powerfully is to sing with mixed voice.**

What does that mean? Well, as we mentioned earlier, notes at the bottom are called *chest voice* and notes at the top are called *head voice*. **Singing with a mixed voice means singing in your head voice with the power of your chest voice.**

How do you do that? A simple way to think of it is to combine the chest voice and head voice for every note in your range. So rather than singing every note in chest voice or in head voice, every note is a mix of chest voice and head voice. That way you can hit high notes with the power of your chest voice. And that means you can eliminate your vocal break, hit high notes without falsetto, and sing with more power. But for now here’s my favorite exercise for singing with mixed voice.

See Figure G on next page for visual walkthrough.

How to sing high notes with more power:

1. Say the word “Nay” (as in “neighbor”) out loud in a bratty way. To get the “bratty” sound, just imagine that you’re a little kid teasing someone on the playground: “Nay Nay Nay!”
2. Next, find a comfortable note at the bottom of your voice (try F#3 for men and C#4 for women) and sing that note out loud on the bratty-sounding “Nay.”

3. Finally, sing the bratty “Nay” on an octave repeat scale where you replace each note of the scale with the bratty “Nay” sound.



Figure G – Singing with Mixed Voice

[Here's a video](#) where I walk you through it.

This exercise can sound pretty funny. And that's fine because you're just doing exercises, not singing songs. So as you're singing through the exercise try to keep the tone very bratty and nasal sounding. I promise that if you do the bratty “Nay” correctly, you'll be amazed at how much more powerfully you can hit those high notes.

Vocal Technique #10: Singing Songs

The whole point of learning vocal technique is to sing songs better. So after all the crazy vocal exercises and warm ups I've shown you, it's time to apply what you've learned to songs.

But the catch, as I mentioned earlier, is that **songs are a lot harder to sing than vocal warm-ups because the notes, vowels, consonants, and dynamics are always changing.** So before you dive into a Sam Smith or Ariana Grande song, let's talk about how to choose a song that fits your voice.

How to choose the perfect song for your voice:

There's a lot to think about when choosing a song to perform; the artist, the genre, the hook. But now that you're learning good vocal technique, there are some important things to look for when choosing a song.

Unfortunately, many singers choose songs that are WAY outside their comfort zone. And while that may seem like a good challenge, the truth is that choosing a song that's too hard will actually slow down your progress. So I want to show you the three most important things to look for when choosing a song.

1. PICK A SINGER WITH GOOD VOCAL TECHNIQUE:

There are a lot of famous singers out there with terrible vocal technique.

And when beginners see these successful artists, they imitate their bad habits.

Luckily, there are also lots of singers with fantastic technique that you can listen to.

To hear some examples, check out the [Ramsey Voice Studio Playlist](#). The songs range from simple to very complex, but many of the singers have great technique. So take a listen and find some songs that you connect with.

2. CHOOSE A SONG WITH ONLY A FEW NOTES OUTSIDE YOUR RANGE:

Many singers start out by choosing songs that are WAY outside their vocal range. But if you choose a song that's too far outside your range, you may just strain and tire your voice out. So when you're looking for songs to sing, start by choosing songs with only a few notes outside of your range.

Here's an example: Let's say that your range is from C3 - G4 (which is pretty typical for guys who are just starting out). Choosing a Sam Smith song might be just too hard for you since he often sings around an A4 and above! Instead, choose a song that has some notes in the bottom, with just a few notes outside your comfortable range. Then, once you've got that song down, move on to songs with higher notes.

3. PICK A SONG THAT YOU HAVE A CONNECTION WITH:

In order to master a song, you're going to have to sing it a lot. Even when you choose a song that's perfect for you, odds are you'll still have to sing it a lot to get it perfect. That's why it's so important that you choose songs that you really love. You'll already have the lyrics memorized, so you can perform it better, and you also won't get tired of it when you sing it for the hundredth time.

So now that you've chosen the perfect song for your voice, I want to give you my favorite exercise for improving it.

How to Improve Any Song:

As I mentioned before, songs are harder to sing than vocal warm ups. So why not apply some of these awesome vocal techniques to a song you're learning? In this exercise, I'll show you how to use a powerful vocal warm up to help you sing your song better.

1. **Select a phrase from a song that's been hard for you.** Choose a chorus or hook where the high notes are just a little bit outside your comfortable range.
2. Next, rather than singing the lyrics, **sing each note of the melody on the bratty "Nay" exercise.** Basically, you'll just replace each note of the melody with the bratty "Nay" sound. You should feel that this already makes the notes a bit easier.

3. **Repeat this exercise** a few times until you feel that the notes are comfortable.
4. Now, go back to the lyrics of the song and **sing the lyrics with some of that “bratty” sound**. Don’t worry if it doesn’t sound pretty. The bratty sound will just make it easier than singing the normal lyrics.
5. Finally, when you feel the bratty lyrics are more comfortable, **try to get rid of the bratty sound** and sing in a more normal voice.

I guarantee that the song will be much easier to sing than before. So any time you’re having trouble with a phrase from a song, sing the melody on a bratty “Nay” and then go back to the lyrics.

Congratulations

By now, you should:

- Know what vocal technique is and how it can help you
- Understand how to keep your voice healthy
- Do vocal warm ups, and have good posture and breath support
- Sing through your range, from low notes to high notes
- Be able to hit high notes with power and...
- Improve the songs you're working on

But your journey doesn't end there. Actually, it's just the beginning. The truth is that the best singers in the world work on these vocal techniques daily.

There are plenty more advanced vocal techniques such as vibrato and whistle register, but for now, find the exercises that work well for you, practice them daily, and watch your voice grow. I can't wait to hear how great you sound!



Matt Ramsey, *Ramsey Voice Studio*

Are You Ready to Take Your Voice to the Next Level?

Do you want a complete singing program to take you through each of the vocal techniques I covered and more?

Check out my online video singing course [Master Your Voice](#).

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