

“Breathe Better” by Dr. MeeAe Cecilia Nam

Good breathing is essential for healthy singing and helps to protect the voice from fatigue. Singing without well coordinated breathing is one of common ways to tire your voice. Here are some helpful tips to understand efficient breathing for singing, and exercises that can improve breathing skills for all vocalists.

Understanding Efficient Breathing

- Physically balanced body and poise (noble feeling) for action
- Silent intake of air – no gasps!
- No visible muscle tension – in face, mouth, neck, shoulders or chest.
- The feeling of breath begins deep in the lower part of the body
- Be able to sense the action of the lowest ribs in the back and the lower part of the front abdomen.
- Flexible abdomen and ribs to respond to the demands of singing.

Common Patterns of Inefficient Inhalation

Inhalation with the tummy held in tightly; with back held rigidly; collapsing physically when beginning to sing; gasping; taking in more air than you need.

To Feel the Action of Breathing

Lie on the floor on your back with your hands on your stomach. Breath in, and your hands will rise. Now breathe out, and they will lower. In this position one can not breathe incorrectly. Try to breath the same way when you sing.

Building Daily Exercise to Improve Your Breathing Technique and Capacity:

Stay focused on diaphragm and be sure to not hold tension in your throat during all these exercises.

Exercise1 - Hissing

1. Breathe in to the count of 4, breathe out, hissing, to the count of 4
2. Breathe in for 6, and hiss out for 10
3. in for 6, out for 12
4. in for 2, out for 12
5. in for 4, out for 16
6. in for 2, out for 16
7. in for 4, out for 20
8. in for 1, out for 20

Make the hiss consistent for even tone production.

Exercise 2 – filling up in fractions

1. Breathe in gradually as you fill up your lungs in fractions (3 counts):
On the count of one (1/3 full)
Two – 2/3 full

- Three – full
Four, five, six, seven, eight, nine....- breathe out gradually
Repeat this 3-4 times
2. On the first count of one – ½ full
Two - full
3, 4, 5,..... breathe out gradually
One – full
2, 3, 4, 5, breathe out gradually

Exercise 3: Lip Trills (bubble)

Release your breath through lips vibrating in a relaxed manner, and while you control the supply of air, and feel the diaphragm.

A few breathing exercises every day will strengthen your breathing mechanism and get you ready to sing.