

# Voice Instruction Sheet

## VOCAL HYGIENE:

How to get the best mileage from your voice

| <b><i>DON'T</i></b>   | <b><i>DO</i></b>   |
|---|--|
| <p><b><u>1. Don't Abuse your Voice</u></b></p> <p>a) <b>Don't</b> clear your throat or cough habitually.</p> <p>b) <b>Don't</b> yell, cheer, scream..</p> <p>c) <b>Don't</b> talk over a long distance, especially outside.</p> <p>d) <b>Avoid</b> talking in noisy situations: over loud music: e.g. at noisy parties; in cars / buses; over noisy office machinery or heavy equipment, motors, etc.</p> <p>e) <b>Don't</b> try to lecture, or speak to large audiences without the aid of a microphone.</p> <p>f) <b>Don't</b> try to teach or instruct above musical instruments, singing, students talking, equipment motors running.</p> <p>g) <b>Don't</b> sing beyond comfortable pitch and loudness ranges.</p> | <p><b><u>Identify and Eliminate Vocally-abusive Behaviours.</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- swallow slowly.</li> <li>- drink some water.</li> <li>- relax your throat and let your voice rise above any sensation of obstruction.</li> <li>- use non-vocal sounds, noise or instruments to attract attention from a distance, at sports events, etc.: substitute whistling, clapping, ringing a bell, blowing a horn for yelling.</li> <li>- move close enough to the person you are talking to be heard without yelling.</li> <li>- learn to project your voice without vocal tension or strain, by relaxing your throat, using the breath and allowing your voice pitch to rise slightly to project freely.</li> <li>- adjust your environment as much as possible to reduce background noise.</li> <li>- always face the person(s) you are talking to.</li> <li>- position yourself as close as possible to persons you are conversing with, especially when there is competing noise.</li> <li>- use a microphone for public speaking.</li> <li>- practise microphone technique: keep your voice relaxed, and at a comfortable level, and let the microphone amplify your voice.</li> <li>- wait until the audience or class is quiet and attentive.</li> <li>- find ways to discipline students, or your children, that are <b><u>non - vocal.</u></b></li> <li>- don't try to sing loudly at any high pitch which you cannot manage at a quiet volume.</li> <li>- use an auditory monitoring system which provides adequate feedback of your voice during a singing performance, especially in lounge/bar/nightclub settings where the background noise is high.</li> </ul> |

**DON'T**

**DO**

- h) **Avoid** nervous, vocally abusive habits during lecturing / public speaking / debating:
  - throat clearing
  - holding your breath
  - talking quickly
  - talking on insufficient breath
  - talking on a monotone pitch
  - aggressive or low pitched filler: "um, ah....."
- i) **Avoid** prolonged loud and vocally aggressive laughing / crying.
- j) **Don't** yell or speak extensively during strenuous physical exercise.

- monitor and reduce habits which detract from your vocal presentation.
- practise transferring relaxed, optimal voice use to situations of gradually higher degrees of communicative stress / pressure.
- be aware of the effect stress / emotions have on your voice, especially if it causes muscle tension in your neck, throat, chest, jaw, face etc.
- wait until your breathing pattern can accommodate optimal voice production.

**2. DON'T MISUSE YOUR VOICE:**

**LEARN OPTIMAL VOICE USE:**

- a) **Don't** talk in a low monotone pitch. **Don't** allow your vocal energy to drop so low that the sound becomes gravelly ( " glottal fry " ).
- b) **Don't** hold your breath, as you're planning what to say, or how to say it. At the beginning of a phrase, avoid initiating voice with a harsh and sudden "glottal attack".
- c) **Don't** speak beyond a natural breath cycle: avoid squeezing out the last few words of a thought without sufficient breath.
- d) **Don't** tighten your upper chest, shoulders, neck and throat to breathe in, or to push voice out.
- e) If you sing, **don't** force your voice to stay in a register beyond its comfortable pitch range. Especially, **don't** force your chest voice too high, and in men, **don't** force head tone too high into falsetto range.

- allow your voice pitch to vary freely and expressively.
- keep your voice powered by breath flow, so the tone carries, varies and rings.
- allow for a relaxed inflow of breath before a phrase.
- initiate voice gradually on the outflowing breath, as on a sigh: " aaahhh ".
- speak slowly, pausing often, at natural phrase boundaries, to allow the breath to replace, before you go on.
- allow breath to replace itself naturally, without raising your shoulders and upper chest.
- keep your shoulders and upper chest relaxed during speech.
- be aware of and allow natural expansion/ release in the lower torso, abdomen, and back and sides during the breathing cycle.
- allow registers to change as pitch rises, and drops. This is a natural and mechanically essential phenomenon.
- if you need assistance in singing through register changes smoothly, consult your singing teacher.
- be sensitive to, and eliminate throat tension caused by pushing registers too far.

**DON'T**

**DO**

- f) **Never** clench your teeth.  
Don't hold your jaw tense.  
Don't move your jaw stiffly to speak.
- g) **Avoid** making "unconventional " sounds with your voice for prolonged periods:
  - **don't** whisper.
  - **avoid** making "special effects" sounds: motor noises, reverse vocalizations, low-pitched growling sounds, shrill tense sounds, very high or low-pitched sounds, etc.

- keep upper and lower teeth separated
- allow your jaw to remain passive and to "float" as you speak.
- use a soft voiced tone in place of a tense, harsh whisper.
- if you must produce special vocal effects for acting / singing performances learn to identify / use the best technique to use the voice in versatile ways without vocal abuse/ misuse strain.
- consult your singing teacher/voice therapist.

**3. MAINTAIN A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE AND A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT**

- a) **Don't** demand more of your voice than you would of the rest of your body.
- b) **Don't** use your voice extensively when you have a cold, or when you feel tired.
- c) **Don't** use your voice when it feels strained.
- d) **Don't** ignore prolonged symptoms of vocal strain / hoarseness / pain / fullness / heartburn, or allergies.
- e) **Don't** expose your voice to excessive pollution: cigarette smoke, chemical fumes, etc.  
**DON'T SMOKE.**  
**DON'T** drink **ALCOHOL** excessively.
- f) .....

- allow for several periods of voice rest during the day.
- rest your voice, with the rest of your body, when you're ill or tired.
- learn to be sensitive to the first signs of vocal fatigue: hoarseness, throat tension, dry throat, poor vocal projection.
- get lots of rest before situations of high vocal demand.
- consult your doctor if you experience throat discomfort or hoarseness for more than ten days.
- maintain proper humidity, both inside your body (drink plenty of fluids daily), and in your environment (30%).
- use a shoulder- type seat belt in an automobile to prevent laryngeal injury in the event of an accident.