

Singer's to-do List

Placement

- 1) Jaw Back. This facilitates a dropped jaw from where it matters—at the hinge (not the front of the mouth). Also, when the jaw is back, the soft palate goes up.
- 2) Create space inside. Maintain a raised soft palate and a low larynx while singing.
- 3) Your breath preps the vowel. Inhale into the vowel you are about to sing. Prepare efficiently—avoid inhaling in one shape then singing in another.
- 4) “Slurp” (legato). When changing notes on a single vowel, do so smoothly without “clicking.” The sensation may feel like you are “slurping” between the notes. Done properly, however, the note changes will be clean and healthy.
- 5) Right next door. Vowels should feel as though they are related. Increase the similarity between vowels, and decrease the dramatic differences--particularly extreme mouth positions.
- 6) More/less/least. When ascending, decrescendo. Maintain consistency by singing more/less/least as you ascend. More/less/least = low/medium/high pitches.
- 7) Modify. As the voice produces higher pitches, the vowel modifies toward a “closed” vowel. Paradoxically, this occurs as the placement shifts inward and space increases. The further “in” or back, the smaller the vowel. In other words, frequently [a] becomes [oe]; [o] becomes [u]; [u] becomes ultra [u]. On the other end, [ε] becomes [I]; and the exception, [i] modifies slightly bigger toward [oe] or [I]. That said, modification needs can vary according to the person, the range, and the text.
- 8) From above. Initiate sound as though you were already singing above the assigned pitch. Sneak into the attack; avoid “popping” or “jerking” the attack.
- 9) Don't let the consonant tell the vowel where to go. Consonants are produced in the forward part of the mouth. Vowels are inside. To prevent your consonant from dictating placement, separate the two worlds.

Body and Breath

- 1) Fat-tummy inhale. Send the breath down and out. Avoid the attend-HUT breath where the shoulders raise and the tummy sucks in.
- 2) Let the breath come to you. Avoid reaching out or gasping for air. Allow inhalation to initiate low in your body--not at your neck, mouth or head.
- 3) As you sing (or exhale), maintain the inhale position of the body. That is, don't collapse. Take a proper breath (down and out) and try to maintain your body position as you progress through a phrase. The longer you sing without taking another breath, your sternum and ribcage must work harder to maintain the inhale position. A critical byproduct of this effort is support. Use your breath, yes, but don't let the body lose the inhale position.
- 4) Support. A sensation of resistance found through a lifted sternum and the feeling of an ever-expanding rib cage. As you use air and reach the end of your supply, resist the temptation to let your upper body sag. As you resist, you will feel your support (muscles below the rib cage) automatically kick in--try it!

Maintain the Inhale!

Placement: high soft palate and low larynx

Body and Breath: lifted sternum and expanded rib cage

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