

Diaphragm Breathing

- First align your Body
- Inhale and expand your waistline
- Exhale with Firm abdominals
- Keep ribs and chest open and stable as you exhale (sing)

Breathing well will support your voice. Singing when there's no breath left is a common way of tiring your voice. Follow the steps below to help improve your breathing.

- Breathe deeply from your lower lungs - imagine blowing up a balloon (your diaphragm)
- Breathe in and try to push the balloon outwards.
- Breathe in taking sips in through your mouth then breathing in through your nose and out through mouth.
- Avoid raising your shoulders as you breathe in - keep them relaxed and level.
- Relax! Tension will prevent you from making a good sound.

To practice breathing well, try this:

Lie on the floor on your back with your hands on your stomach. Breath in (inhale) and your hands will rise. Now breathe out (exhale) and they will lower. In this position it is virtually impossible to breathe incorrectly. Try to breath in the same way when you sing.

Practice breathing regularly to improve your technique and build your capacity

Exercise 1 - Hissing

- Breathe in to the count of 4, breathe out, hissing, to the count of 4
- Then, breathe in for 6, and hiss out for 10
- in for 6, out for 12
- in for 2, out for 12
- in for 4, out for 16
- in for 2, out for 16
- in for 4, out for 20
- in for 1, out for 20

The idea is to monitor your breathing, and ensure that you can last through long phrases. Be economical with your breathing. Make sure the hiss is consistent; that it is not louder at the beginning than at the end. You are aiming for a smooth even sound.

Exercise 2 - Snatched Breaths

- Breathing in gradually, think of your lungs filling up in fractions, when you count. Focus on the diaphragm, being careful not to hold tension in the throat.
- On the count of '1' - breathe in ($\frac{1}{4}$ full)
- '2' - ($\frac{1}{2}$ full)
- '3' - ($\frac{3}{4}$ full)

- '4' - (full)
- 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 - breathe out, gradually.
- Repeat, on the count of '1' - breathe in ($\frac{1}{2}$ full) '2' - (full)
- 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 - breathe out gradually.

BREATHING EXERCISES

■ Breath observation

This exercise is helpful in encouraging proper abdominal action in singing. Simply observe your body's natural movement and don't try to do anything special to influence your breathing.

1. Lay on the floor and place a small book approximately 1 1/2 inches thick under your head to align your body.
2. Focus your attention on your natural breathing process. As you inhale, your abdominal muscles below your rib cage rise, and as you exhale, they move inward. Observe the openness of your ribs around your waistline and memorize this feeling.
3. Rest your hands on your abdomen and breath normally, observing the rise and fall of your belly.
4. Stand up and reproduce this breathing action, expanding as you inhale.

■ Releasing abdominal muscles

This is especially useful for singers who need to become aware of how to release their lower abdominal muscles to take a full breath.

1. Stand with your feet about 18 inches away from a table (or the back of a chair).
2. Lean with your hands on the edge, as if you were looking at something on the table.
3. Take a slow, deep breath, letting your belly feel as if it will fall toward the floor. Don't hold your abdominal muscles in, but rather allow them to drop, assisted by gravity.
4. Exhale, with firm abdominal muscles.

5. Inhale again, feeling the expansion in your back muscles and the release of your abdominal muscles toward the floor.
6. Try singing a few easy passages of a song, letting your abdominal muscles drop toward the floor when you inhale between phrases.
7. Stand upright and try to get the same released feeling in your abdominal muscles when you inhale.

■ Extending your breath

This exercise can help coordinate and energize your breath support. Practice Step One until you can make it through comfortably, then add on Step Two, then Step Three. Take care not to inhale too fast or raise your chest when you inhale. During the exhalation phase of each step, try to maintain the openness in your ribs for the entire count. When all three steps can be performed consecutively without stopping, increase the exhalation count to 25 or 30. Put your metronome on 80 beats per minute.

Step One

1. Inhale to a count of 10, taking in two tiny sips of air per metronome beat, expanding your lower abdominal muscles and ribs.

Exhale for 20 beats using repeated short hisses, two hisses per metronome beat. After 20 counts, begin the next inhalation.

2. Inhale again to a count of 10, taking in two tiny sips of air per metronome beat.

Exhale for 20 beats using one long, sustained hiss.

3. Inhale again to a count of 10, taking in two tiny sips of air per metronome beat.

Sing "ah" on a comfortable pitch for 20 beats. Try to maintain the feeling of openness in your ribs for the entire exhalation. (Continue without stopping to Step Two if you successfully complete this with no problem.)