



<http://susananders.com/just-songs-vocal-workout-vol-2>

This sample portion of the guidebook includes the Table of Contents, How to Use the CDs and Guidebook, and Chapter 3: "Why Don't You Do Right?"/Breathing & Placement. The guidebooks are the same for all three versions of the workout.

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## **How to Use the CDs and Guidebook**

The CDs can be used with or without the guidebook to warm up and strengthen your voice. However, I hope that you'll read the guidebook since it's full of useful information, especially if you are a beginning singer. If you want to get right to singing, the CDs alone will work just fine for most singers.

### **Working with the CDs**

Sing along with me (or Perry White if you have the baritone/soprano version) on CD #1 until you learn the melodies and lyrics to all of the songs. Basses will sing an octave lower than my voice, and sopranos will sing an octave higher than Perry. Try the different warm-up sounds I suggest on the CD and see if they work for you—a sound that warms up one voice may do nothing for another, so you will be the ultimate judge. A warmed up voice feels both flexible and strong. You should not feel much sensation in your throat at any time. If you do, you may be wearing your voice out instead of strengthening it. It's fine to repeat songs until they feel right before moving to the next, harder song.

If you are using the workout primarily to warm up your voice before singing other songs, you may use the warm up sounds indefinitely. If you are using the workout to develop your singing ability, you should eventually try singing the song lyrics as well. Beginners especially should work with the warm-up sounds and not the lyrics until they have built up some strength. Beginners may also need to stop after the first few songs the first day, adding songs in the sequence day by day or week by week as their strength increases.

More experienced singers can use the warm-up sounds as they learn the songs or move directly to singing lyrics. Keep in mind that most voices need more warming up in the morning than in the afternoon. If you've had some lessons and know which areas of your voice need the most attention, you can use the songs accordingly, repeating songs or skipping them.

Until you get a feel for the songs, start from the beginning each time you use the CD, unless you use it more than once a day. In that case, you can start where you've left off. If you are using the workout as a supplement to scales and other vocal exercises it's fine to pick and choose the songs you like, but if you don't feel warmed up enough from your other exercises start with the earlier, easier songs. Advanced singers who want to sing the workout in a shorter time period and still get all the way to the last song can try skipping "You're Still the One" and either "Thank You" or "Alison". I'd recommend that beginners go song by song with no skipping.

Once you have the melodies memorized you can use CD #2 and move much faster. On CD #2 the only vocals are mine as I announce the title, the warm-up sound, and the focus for each song. This disc gives you more room for your own interpretation of the songs since it only has music tracks and no melody. Because it has no melody it's also better for working on intonation. At the end of CD #2 you'll find an additional section on how to stylize several of the songs. There you'll find examples of the "expansion ideas" that are in most of the chapters. All of the expansion ideas in the guidebook should be attempted after you are well warmed up and have mastered the song you want to stylize. If you have trouble singing with just the tracks go back to CD #1 for awhile. Make sure you have the melody down and try counting along with the intros so you know where the vocal comes in.

Singing the first eight to ten songs should be enough to warm up your voice for the day. The second half will help you build more range, strength, volume, and vocal dexterity. Most of these later songs are more difficult. If you feel any vocal strain that isn't relieved by any of the methods cited earlier in the workout, either take a break for half an hour or quit for the day. It's much easier on the voice to work shorter daily sessions as opposed to a long session once a week. Regular daily sessions, even short ones, are also better for building and maintaining vocal strength.

Some of these versions of the songs vary from the original. Long intros and instrumental sections have been edited out so you'll be continuously singing. I didn't always use the key in which the song was originally recorded. Instead, I picked keys that would work for a typical alto and bass or soprano and baritone. Having said that, keep in mind that every voice is different and may not fit perfectly in a typical range. The lowest note altos will sing is the Eb below middle C, the highest is the Eb two octaves above that. Basses will sing the same range an octave lower. The lowest note baritones will sing is the Ab an octave and a half below middle C, the highest is the Ab two octaves above that. Sopranos will sing the same range an octave higher. If a note is too high or low for you to sing comfortably, try the troubleshooting suggestions in the book or find an alternate note. It's never good to force your voice where it doesn't want to go.

### **Working With the Book and CDs**

The guidebook goes deeper than the CDs into many different aspects of voice technique. I discuss a different vocal topic in each chapter, plus I troubleshoot the hard parts of each song. The sequence of topics follows the same general sequence I use when I'm coaching a singer in private lessons.

To get the full benefit of the workout, try this method for using the book and CD together: read the first chapter and try the various sounds before you listen to and

sing the first song on the CD. Next, read Chapter Two and do the breathing exercises and postures listed there. Stay aware of your breathing when you sing the second song on the CD. Move through the rest of the book in this same manner, reading about each song before learning it. Repeat songs as much as you like, and move as slowly or quickly as you want. A good pace for a beginner would be to add one song and chapter a week for the first nine songs. The later songs are more advanced, so spend more time with each of them before proceeding.

Another method is to use the guidebook only if you are having difficulty with a specific song. Read the section on that song or go straight to the troubleshooting paragraph. Many singers find it helpful to have the lyrics in front of them while learning a song. Feel free to underline problem words and put in breath marks.

Contemporary vocal styles occasionally bend the rules of good voice technique. A singer may push his/her chest voice too high, or go for a throatier, hoarser, or overly airy tone. You can often get away with these styles if you build up a lot of strength and learn the rules so you can break them intelligently. My recommendation is to strive for great voice technique while singing the workout, even if you plan on bending the rules a bit when you sing your own songs.

## **Chapter Three: 'Why Don't You Do Right?'**

**Focus: Breathing and Placement**

**Sound: Myah**

**Alto/Bass Key: C# minor**

**Baritone/Soprano Key: F# minor**

If you forget everything else while you're singing, make your mantra "Breathing and Placement." Those two concepts will carry you a long way towards sounding good and having vocal longevity. Combining them is your goal with this song, but since it's still early in your warm-up I want to also get everything in your "vocal path" loose. The annoying thing about the vocal cords is that they go to sleep when you sleep and have to be gently reawakened daily. Many singers find that they can't take naps before performing without losing their vocal edge. Also, almost all of us carry tension in various parts of our bodies that can affect our voices. Your mouth, jaw, neck, shoulders, and stomach all need to be relaxed to get your best sound.

Some singers go a little wild with the relaxation part of warming up. I know more than one singer who massages her tongue before singing! Some singers don't carry loads of tension in their bodies and go right to singing, while others need 10-20 minutes of body loosening to get a decent sound. Since every singer is different, I'd experiment with a lot of things before singing and see what works for you. Try making faces for face and mouth tension and self-massage for jaw tension. Try not to overly open to stretch out your jaw, I think self-massage where your jaw bones meet is better. Neck rolls and shoulder shrugs help to ease tension in those areas. Sitting in a squat or bending over with your knees bent is good for stomach tension. Swimming and yoga are excellent to do before singing since both encourage stretching and breathing concurrently, just don't wear yourself out. Save some energy for singing,

you'll need it. Don't do a bunch of stomach crunches right before singing, since the resulting tight abs could inhibit a relaxed inhalation.

Sloppy sounds are great for initial vocalizing. Yes, you might sound a little drunk or stupid, but your tongue, jaw and throat all relax when you make sloppy sounds. Less restriction on the air flow means more facial resonance, a richer sound, more bang for your buck. You'll also be less apt to grab the notes by tightening your throat as you work through your range. We all want to build vocal strength and control, but at this stage I'd recommend doing anything that gets you and your tension out of the way of your own voice.

What you may not have here is a sense of pitch accuracy. Go for a Billie Holiday feel here and slide on through the sound. Later in the workout when you are well warmed there are several songs that will work that pitch thing. I'm as obsessed with singing in tune as you are, but it's way too easy to overly tighten your throat and face if you worry about pitch accuracy too early in your warm up. Learn from my mistakes: in my early twenties I worked with a teacher who spent a lot of time getting me to loosen my throat. Since I'd developed my pitch control by tightening my throat all the time, I went completely out of tune for a couple of weeks. The players in the band I was fronting at the time were not amused!

If you are convinced that you have serious pitch problems, go ahead and learn the songs without sliding. Instead, sing on "dee" or "da." If you feel any throat tension, slowly shake your head "no" as you sing. Once you feel more solid about the pitch you can gradually go more sloppy or slide-y. Notice how your resonance increases when you do this.

Like tongue rolls from Chapter Two, slow head shaking is another quick fix you can do to release throat tension as you move through the songs. Head shaking is great because you can do it as you sing the lyric.

Though the "ah" vowel and sounds that include it (nah, myah, yah, etc.) are commonly used with beginning singers, some singers have difficulty with it. "Ah" can be hard to control on low notes, and high notes may feel too airy and unresonant. If this is the case with you, try substituting "yeah" for any "ah" sounds that occur in the first half of the workout. "Yeah" is more nasal and therefore more resonant. After a week or two try alternating "yeah" with the "ah" sound. After some time doing this you will probably find that the "ah" sound has become more resonant and can be used on its own.

## **Warming Up**

Check your posture. Imagine a long string attaching the crown of your head to the ceiling, and your body hanging from the string, so your arms and shoulders are relaxed, neither thrown back nor hunched. Your nose should be pointing straight ahead. Keep your rib cage up on both the inhalation and exhalation.

- Loosely sing the melody on "myah" until your throat, face and mouth feel relaxed.
- Switch to singing the lyric.

Continue your sloppy singing when you switch to the lyric to make sure it feels relaxed. You'll probably sound drunk! Gradually use your lips and tongue more crisply to get your enunciation more normal sounding, but go back to drunk singing if you feel any throat tension. Or try sounding drunk, then sober, on alternate lines of the songs. With both methods your ultimate goal is to get clear enunciation as you keep your throat relaxed.

### **Troubleshooting**

If your throat feels tight or your breathing feels restricted when you try normal singing, try the head shaking I mentioned earlier. Or, try swaying your arms as you sing. Just a little bit of movement can do the trick to relax your throat and breathing.

You may notice some notes that feel off or out of tune in "Why Don't You Do Right?" Twice in each verse there is a note that is a little outside of the key. In the first verse those notes fall on "teen" of "Nine-teen," and on "a" of "people make a fool." Those are the correct notes! In blues or blues influenced songs you will often hear notes like these that feel a little dissonant. They're called "blue notes".

### **Expansion Ideas**

Descending passing tones are a common ornamentation that you can hear in virtually every contemporary style. Try adding one to the last word of the first phrase of "Why Don't You Do Right?" To do that, sing the correct note, then go down the scale two more notes to another chord note. Though they usually pass in stepwise motion down (or up) the scale, sometimes you will skip a note to land on a chord note, like the passing tone on the word "play" in line two of "Dear Prudence." Passing tones done well are both accurate and flowing, so watch that you aren't overly sliding over the notes. Frequently the inflection, that is the note with more volume, is on the first of the three notes. Passing tones will work at the end of every phrase of "Why Don't You Do Right?"

Check out versions of "Why Don't You Do Right?" by these singers:

Ella Fitzgerald • Peggy Lee • Jessica Rabbit

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