

## Vocal Technique 2

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# VOCAL TECHNIQUE 2

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# Foreword

To be a great singer you need to have the tools, technique and experiences to maintain a long and successful career. Vocal health is essential to a life full of singing. There is no better way to protect your voice than to gain the knowledge of how your voice works and how to use it properly. Each part of your vocal range can be shaped and manipulated through focused practice.

The next time someone asks you, "I need a vocalist, can you sing country music and gospel?" you can answer confidently, "Yes!" As you read through each chapter, you will learn to let your artistry shine without damaging your vocal cords, how to listen effectively and how to express yourself in different genres. The more versatile you are as a performer, the more you will be hired. The combination of these tools will greatly improve your vocal technique and open up a world of possibilities. This book is meant to give you the guidance, confidence and knowledge to become a stronger singer.

Singers require special attention to the environment and body to maintain vocal health. Keep these bullet points in mind throughout your training.

## **Do Not:**

- Clear your throat forcefully.
- Cheer, yell or scream loudly.
- Talk in noisy environments (i.e. speaking over loud music at a noisy party or club).
- Sing while your voice hurts.
- Grunt during strenuous exercise or to get someone's attention.
- Speak or sing without proper breath support.
- Whisper.
- Overuse your voice. Make sure to take sufficient breaks while performing and practicing.
- Ignore prolonged symptoms of vocal strain or damage.

## **Do:**

- Drink frequent sips of water while practicing or performing to moisturize your throat.
- Avoid cigarette smoke, chemical fumes and excessive alcohol intake.
- Become aware of how the weather can affect your voice.
- Utilize amplification while singing or speaking to crowds.
- Always face the people you are talking to and speak clearly.
- Take deep supported breaths while speaking and singing.
- Use a softer speaking voice instead of a whisper.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day.
- Avoid caffeine and other phlegm-producing drinks like orange juice and milk.
- Consult an ear, nose and throat doctor (ENT) whom you trust for regular checkups.

## Chapter 1: Introduction to Vocal Technique 2

Vocal technique offers a vast number of tools to strengthen a performer. Vocalists must practice with a number of techniques in mind that are specific to the unique workings of the human voice. This book will cover many of the necessary skills to become a better listener and a better performer. Singing is a mental exercise. This book will teach singers to think critically about the identifiable traits each genre requires. To begin the study, a brief review and an in-depth discussion of vocal registers, in relation to strengthening and troubleshooting the voice, will be explained. Examples of popular artists will be analyzed in order to recognize these registers.

Each voice may be categorized several ways, depending on the genre, style and tradition of classical and popular music. The vocal range will be discovered by assessment and by learning the methods used to categorize the voice. Once the vocal range is discovered, a focus on personal development will demonstrate weak points in the range and how to strengthen them.

The voice is a complicated structure of ligaments and muscles, and just like an athlete warms up before a race, the voice must be warmed up before singing. There are many exercises that will strengthen specific parts of the voice. Each song may present different vocal weaknesses. Once the trouble spots are established, these exercises will be essential for phrasing, agility and strengthening each section.

The importance of ear training cannot be stressed enough. Every genre has stylistic traits that may be learned through listening. Focused practice and ear training will enable the voice to become fluid throughout the registers, to be rhythmically and stylistically appropriate to the genre and to deepen the understanding of a song.

Vocal fluidity comes from “bridging the gap” between each register. The *passaggio*, which literally means “the passage” in Italian, is that bridge. The best result of *passaggio* training is an expansion of the vocal range with greater agility and musical freedom. The placement of each note will determine the tone and color of the voice. Proper placement allows the *passaggio* to grow and the vibrato to develop. The vibrato can be characterized several ways, based on the placement of the note and vibration of the vocal cords. There are many styles of vibrato and each voice has an individual vibrato sound. There are certain styles of vibrato that have become distinguished in each genre. Examples of artists in several categories will be analyzed to solidify the stylistic use of vibrato in each genre. The study of placement, vibrato and *passaggio* will allow vocal fluidity and health, but where the voice resonates gives an artist a distinct tone and style. There are several aspects to resonance that may be categorized stylistically. Focused practicing of resonance will enable versatility in several genres, to blend with other vocalists, and to establish individual vocal style.

This book teaches vocalists to place the voice, expand the range, sustain vocal longevity, avoid vocal injuries, and become stylistically versatile. Singing with a durable, healthy and distinctive tone is ideal—but opening your ears to the stylistic characteristics of each genre will help shape your true vocal style.

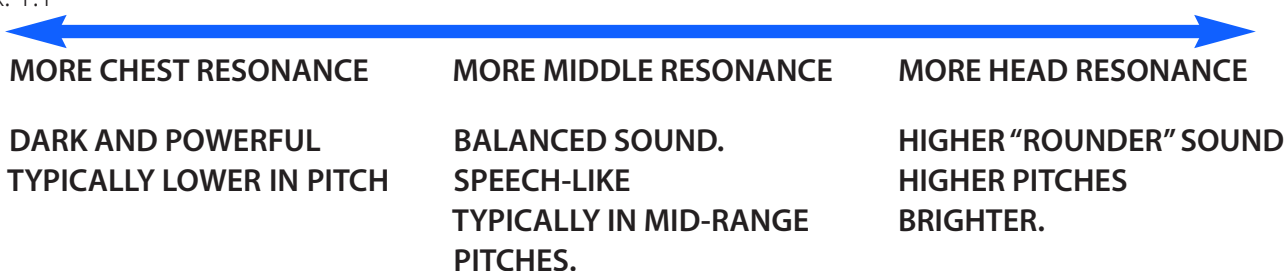
# Chapter 2: Vocal Registers

## Review

As discussed in the previous book, Vocal Technique 1, vocal registers each vibrate differently, the vibrations produced by the vocal cords vary in each register. Vocal registers originate in the larynx, where the vocal folds are located. Register shifts occur when the vibratory pattern of the vocal folds change as the pitch rises or falls. The four vibratory forms are known as: Vocal registers originate in the laryngeal function (i.e., the larynx, where the vocal folds are located) and occur when the vibratory pattern of the vocal folds change as the pitch rises or falls. Leading research has shown that the vocal cords are capable of producing at least four distinct vibratory registers. The four vibratory forms are known as:

- **The Low Register:** Usually a deep or rich full sound, this register utilizes the lowest notes in the singing range. Also known as *chest voice* or *low modal voice*.
- **The Middle Register:** Usually a warm, natural or round sound that may become thinner at the topmost notes. Most singing and speaking is done in this register. Also known as *modal voice*, *mixed voice* and may contain the *passaggio*, as further discussed in Unit 3 of this book.
- **The High Register:** Usually a bright or ringing sound, typically the resonance is felt in the head. Also known as *head voice* or *falsetto*, depending on production mechanisms and tone quality.
- **The Whistle Register:** Usually the sound is similar to a whistle. This is the highest and most advanced register of the human voice. Also known as *flute register* and *whistle tone*.

Ex. 1.1



The four registers each have their own vibratory functions, their own ranges (which may overlap into other registers), and their own characteristic sound. However varied the descriptive terminology, it's beneficial to recognize the different characteristics and understand the physiological functions that produce those differences. This knowledge will assist to developing exercises for singing comfortably from register to register.

It is important to know your individual **vocal range**. The *vocal range* is the measure of the distance between the lowest and highest note that the voice can reach. The four registers are within this range. A trained singer has a bigger and more accessible range than an untrained singer, who has not yet learned to gain access to more notes through proper technique and regular vocal exercise. Every instrument has its own unique range capabilities. Some voices are able to develop more extensive ranges than others.

Ex. 1.2

| Register | Muscles used                  | Part of folds in vibration           | Quality produced         | Pitch                                    |
|----------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Pulse    | TA only                       | most                                 | vocal fry;<br>pulsating  | lowest; below singing pitch              |
| Chest    | mostly TA,<br>some CT.        | most, both cover and body            | heavier,<br>fuller tone  | lower part of singing range              |
| Head     | mostly CT,<br>some TA.        | cover only                           | lighter,<br>thinner tone | upper part of singing range              |
| Falsetto | CT only, TA is completely lax | very little, only outer cover layers | lightest possible        | highest sung pitches; above normal range |

## The Low Register

Lower register is the group of notes produced in the lowest portion of the vocal range. The simultaneous contraction of the thyroarytenoid and the cricothyroid muscles create low register voice qualities. The vocal fold length, thickness, and tautness, create a thicker and more full-bodied sound when those muscles contract. This register is known as the chest register, low modal register, or heavy mechanism. To sing in the low register may create vibrations in the chest, which is why some people refer to it as “chest voice.” It is recommended to use the term “low register” to reflect the nature of the laryngeal movements and to eliminate the assumption that the sound production occurs in the chest.

Ex. 1.3

### Exercises that engage the low register:

- Start on the G above middle C on the piano.
- Sing G-C down a major scale from “sol” to “do” (5-4-3-2-1), using the words “my, my, my, my, my.”
- Move down by a half step each time through the exercise, until your voice cannot sing any lower. Do you feel the vibrations in the upper chest cavity? You are singing in the low register.

### To strengthen the low register:

Relax your body as you sing down the scale, trying to maintain a “light” feeling by thinking upward. Do not depress your chin into your neck. This will open up your airways leave more room for your vocal cords to vibrate. The lower frequencies require larger movement of the vocal cords. However, if you raise your head too much, the vocal cords will stretch and you will get the opposite effect. You need to find a perfect balance of relaxation, roundness and “lift” to phonate in the lowest part of your range.

Video example of low register:

- Josh Turner: “Your Man”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HgS\\_gGfhZM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HgS_gGfhZM)

## The Middle Register

The middle register is the connector between the chest voice (low) and the head voice (high). It may create vibration in the mouth and neck. The middle register may feel similar to the high register for many female singers, and similar to low register for many male singers. The timbre of this register is usually a result of a mix of both the chest and the head voice qualities, or an in-between color, giving it a very warm, rich tone that isn't quite as dark as the low register, but also not quite as bright as the high register. This is also known as a "mix" because in this area of the voice it is neither 100 percent chest voice nor 100 percent head voice. It's a combination.

Ex. 1.4

### Exercises that engage the middle register:

- Start on the middle C on the piano.
- Sing C-G up a major scale from "do" to "sol", (1-2-3-4-5), using the words "va, va, va, va, va.."
- Move up by a halfstep each time through the exercise, through your mixed range, until you must switch to the high register. You are singing in the middle register.

Video example of middle register:

- Adele: "Rumour Has It"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uK3MLITL5Ko>

### To strengthen the middle register:

Relax your body as you sing up the scale. Try to maintain a full, bright feeling in your mask by thinking downward on the ascending notes. Do not put your chin up. The middle frequencies require tighter movements of the vocal cords and you will feel the muscles contracting upward. As you ascend up the scale, you may need to gradually add elements of the high register in the upper portion of the middle range to blend fluidly into the high register. Take full deep breaths and support your tone while keeping the shoulders and neck relaxed.



## The High Register

The high register is the group of notes produced in the upper portion of the vocal range. The resonance is usually felt in the cheekbone, forehead, teeth and upper lip area, which is referred to as *the mask*. The contractions of the two muscles result in the manipulation of in vocal fold length, tautness and thickness, creating bright, thinner and “lighter” sound in the high register. The decreased intensity in the voice source is produced when the thinned section of vocal fold tissue is involved in the vibratory function, in contrast to the thicker vocal fold tissue when lower register vocals are produced. Thinner vocal folds are lengthened by muscle movement, the vocal folds move closer towards each other in the top portion of the vocal folds.

This register is known as the head voice or falsetto, depending on tone quality. To sing in the head voice may create a more airy or mixed sound (elements of middle and high registers) in the lower mask, while the falsetto is considered more “hooty” and creates a purer tone resonating in the forehead and upper mask. It is recommended to use the term “high register” to reflect the upward nature of the laryngeal movements and to cover both the head and falsetto characteristics of the upper range.

Ex. 1.5

### Exercises that engage the high register:

- Start on the G above middle C on the piano.
- Sing G-D on a major scale from “do” to “sol” (1-2-3-4-5), using the words “ya, ya, ya, ya, ya.”
- Move up a half step each time through the exercise, until your voice cannot sing any higher before loss of tone or switching to the whistle register. You are singing in the high register.

Video example of high register vocal:

- Kiesza: “Hideaway”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3W8yBaBDos>

### **To strengthen the high register:**

Relax your body as you sing up the scale. Try to maintain a "light" open feeling by thinking upward. Keep your chin down and eyebrows up to activate resonance in the forehead as you ascend. This will open up your throat and leave more room for your vocal cords to vibrate at a more adducted rate. The higher frequencies require faster movements of the vocal cords. Tap your forehead as you sing to feel the resonance in the center of the forehead. The shape of the vowel may be adjusted from "ya" to "yea" as you ascend, to create more of a "buzz" in the mask.

### **The Whistle Register**

The whistle register is the topmost portion of the vocal range, which may sound similar to a whistle or flute. Few singers are able to use the whistle register, although some female artists like Ariana Grande, Mariah Carey, Minnie Riperton and Yma Sumac have become famous for it. This register in females is known as the flute, whistle or flageolet. For males singers it is known as the falsetto or pure falsetto. The quality of the whistle register, when compared to the essential qualities of the low and high registers, can be described as the brightest and thinnest, although a longer vocal tract and expanded pharyngeal cavity may add "fuller", "rounder" or a "darker" tonal quality. This quality is manipulated by the vocal folds. With proper vocal training, it is possible for women of all voice types to phonate in this part of the voice. However, some women are unable to comfortably sing in this register. It is rare but possible for male singers to sing in the whistle register.

Ex. 1.6

#### **Exercises that engage the whistle register:**

This is an advanced technique: do not push too hard or overextend the vocal cords or damage may occur. Be gentle and precise. Try this exercise with your vocal coach to ensure healthy engagement.

- Start on the C two octaves above middle C on the piano.
- Sing C, D, E on a major scale from "do" to "mi" (1-2-3), using the vowel shape "ooo, ooo, ooo," then "ah, ah, ah."
- Move up a half step each time through the exercise, until your voice cannot sing any higher. You are singing in the whistle register.

Video examples of singing in the whistle register:

- Carey's Whistle Register Collection:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF6hEhJwhxk>