

Make the Best of your Choral Singing

There are many aspects of choral singing for example a choral society, a school choir, a male voice or female voice choir, a madrigal group, a church or cathedral choir or an opera company chorus.

Have you ever felt dissatisfied about your singing in your choir rehearsal or in a performance?

Did your voice let you down or did you find the music too difficult?

Bear in mind that often choral singers (or maybe conductors) have had little or no vocal tuition therefore it is possible that the vocal preparation was not adequate. Were there warm-ups at the beginning of rehearsals? Did you miss some rehearsals? Did you do homework between rehearsals?

Here are some **Dos** and **Don'ts**.

Assuming that you have been accepted as a choir member (possibly via an audition) and that your voice range was checked, it is vital that you are placed in the correct vocal part. The conductor should make the decision.

Please **do not** opt to sing soprano because you 'like to sing the tune'. You must have a high enough voice: it is a physiological matter depending on the size of your vocal cords. If you are not sure about what is right for you, singing lessons would provide the answer.

Vocal cords are a certain size and thickness. This determines what your range can be. As a parallel, think of violin strings versus cello strings. Short, slim vocal cords will more readily and regularly produce higher notes than thicker, longer ones. The range is different – as with stringed instruments.

Then there is the **tessitura – the average pitch of the vocal line**. A true tenor with a knowledge of technique can regularly sing high notes while a man, possibly a high baritone, can sing high notes only occasionally otherwise he will have vocal strain. **Singing falsetto is not the answer!**

The tessitura comfortable for your voice will determine your voice category.

Generally there are more baritones and sopranos than contraltos, tenors or basses. Usually mezzos or countertenors sing the contralto line, baritones the bass line. The **timbre** of the sound you make depends on your resonances such as the air-filled pockets, the sinuses, in your facial bone structure.

A boy singing soprano is known as a **treble**. He should minimise his singing when his voice is changing. This may take a few years.

VIDEO LINK [The Vienna Boys Choir You Tube O Tannenbaum - Bing Videos](#)

Careful choice of repertoire according to the vocal resources available in your choir or choral society can result in everyone being accommodated.

Be aware that regular straining of the vocal cords perhaps due to lack of diaphragmatic support or singing the wrong vocal range can cause nodules on the cords which, in the worst scenario, might have to be surgically removed.

If you have a sore throat as a consequence of singing this is a sign of straining and should not happen. Even with correct technique, vocal stamina has to be gradually acquired. Just as athletes train their muscles, singing improves with correct coordination of breathing and diaphragmatic support. Tension should be avoided. It is also essential to sing with an open throat, a yawn position. This will create a round sound.

Do make sure you are placed in the correct vocal part.

Do warm up before a rehearsal or concert even if it is merely humming.

In all cases, progress in semitone steps to top line F, if possible.

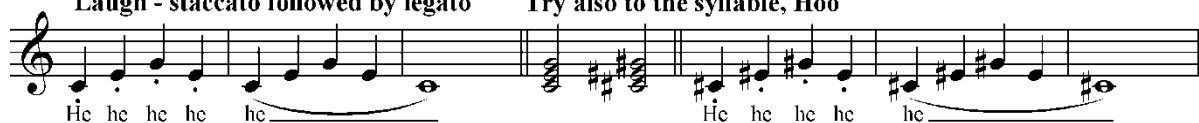
Hum Move up in semitone steps

Musical notation for humming exercise. It consists of two staves. The first staff shows a melodic line starting on a middle C and moving up in semitone steps to F, with a sustained chord accompaniment. The second staff shows the same melodic line starting on a higher C and moving up in semitone steps to F, also with a sustained chord accompaniment.

Progress in semitone steps to top line F

Musical notation for 'Wa wa wa wa wa' exercise. It consists of two staves. The first staff shows a melodic line starting on a middle C and moving up in semitone steps to F, with the syllable 'wa' written below. The second staff shows the same melodic line starting on a higher C and moving up in semitone steps to F, also with the syllable 'wa' written below.

Laugh - staccato followed by legato Try also to the syllable, Hoo

Musical notation for 'He he he he he' exercise. It consists of two staves. The first staff shows a melodic line starting on a middle C and moving up in semitone steps to F, with the syllable 'he' written below. The second staff shows the same melodic line starting on a higher C and moving up in semitone steps to F, also with the syllable 'he' written below.