

Warm-up exercises that teach something

Compiled and developed by Laura Pihowich B.Mus.; M.Mus.

1. Breathing Exercises

- Here are some breathing games designed and developed to get more oxygen into the body, which will help relax you and your children. SingBabySing™ has developed many of the following exercises. Their website is a great source for fun instructional videos about your voice and how to do the warm-ups.
- According to the site: Oxygen is the body's most important brain food, and studies show that increased oxygen helps memory performance, while decreased oxygen can literally destroy its cells! Do these with your children and have them follow along:

The Rain: Beat or No Beat? By Laura Pihowich

Age: 3–9 Year olds, and easily adapted for older age

1. Standing up, you demo a rain sound. Breathe deeply as you raise the arms and release air saying: “SHHHHHHHHH” slowly as the arms go down.
2. Say that this sound had no beat (you can't clap steadily to it) and repeat.
3. Demonstrate a Rain sound that is very musical. Breathe deeply raise arms and release saying: “SH, SH, SH, SH” steadily, until your arms are back down and you are out of air. Ask students if this time there was a beat and have students lead students to see why you called it a musical rain.
4. Repeat a few times. Ask: “Beat or no Beat?” On another day, have individual students take the lead and others guess.
5. You can have other sounds to identify beat or no beat such as clock ticking, hammering, ambulance or police sirens.

You can use this warm-up without the identification portion, three to four times for a quick one and change to another activity.

Milkshake for posture and support by Laura Pihowich

Age: All

1. Students breathe in and raise their hands in front of their bodies as hugging a giant milkshake. They can sip air as if they were sipping from a big straw. It will help them stand properly and lift the rib cage for deep breathing.

2. Use voice slides changing from a proper posture (slide goes up) and slouching (slide goes down). Stay with the good posture at the end, and continue to another exercise. Voice slides will start opening the singing voice/warm-up.

Dog Pant by SingBabySing™

Age: All ages

Take a deep breath, loosely open your mouth and let your tongue and lower jaw completely relax, like a dog that's been running for a long time. Get your children to do it too. Now pant like that dog would pant, using your diaphragm (big muscle just below the rib cage) and belly muscles. You can even put your "paws" in the air as you pant. Try to pant for longer than you think you can. Then do it again. And again. Don't stop until you feel a wee bit dizzy. That's a good thing. It means you're getting extra oxygen to your brain. So now lie down, roll over and play dead!

Slow Leaky Tire by SingBabySing™

Age: All ages

Pick out a point in front of you and tell them to do it too. It can be a point on the wall, a picture or a light switch, something simple. Then take a deep breath from way down deep inside your belly and purse your lips "like a fish" as you slowly send the air out in a steady stream between your top two front teeth. It should make a slow "hissing" sound, sort of like a soft "s." The game is to see how long it takes you to let all the air out. Young children's mechanism will require to breathe more often than

adults but you can still teach them about “support” by not letting go of their air as quickly with this exercise.

For older students: You may choose to have students sit as they run out of air, and see if more and more students keep standing at the end as you practice this exercise often in your routines. Or if you have a **stop watch or clock with a second hand, you can time each other, jotting down** the amounts on a paper or board. This isn't a game of competition with one another. Rather, the idea is to compete with yourself, increasing your time by at least 1 second or more with each turn.

Imagine a World of Soft Colors and Gentle Sounds... by SingBabySing™
Relaxing after some wild fun

Age: All ages

Now you will make up a story with your children. Have them all lie down on their backs with their eyes closed. Make sure they have their legs uncrossed and their arms lying at their sides with their palms up. Get them to breathe slowly and deeply several times, relaxing every muscle in their faces, arms, legs, belly and feet. Then start painting a picture in their minds, perhaps of a deep green forest full of poppies or ferns and pines; or maybe a mountain stream with a field of wild daisies and an azure blue sky with big fuzzy white clouds lazily drifting by. Or perhaps you'd like to take an imagination journey to the ocean where the sand is warm and soft beneath you. It's all up to you. Feel the freedom to dream, imagine, and create. Lead your children down a beautiful peaceful path in their minds. Stay as long as you can in that peaceful place with them and enjoy the quiet moments of rest. Play some of your soft favourite music.

2. Resonance Exercises: Open and Find our Voices

These exercises help activate the upper singing mechanism after activating the lower respiratory mechanism through the breathing exercises. They will develop projection of the voice and good singing sound or tone.

Yawn-Sigh: a miracle exercise! By Laura Pihowich

Age: All

1. Stretch, roll shoulders bring up and down, roll head only to sides (as supposed to all the way around) Massage jaw right by your ears.
2. At this point you can do some breathing exercise mentioned above or go straight into yawn-sigh
3. Drop jaw as taking a big breath and sigh by saying a long round "AH", high, then lower, and lower. Also, sigh higher and higher. Jaw must continue to be loose and opened but not tense. The sound must be brought forward. The voice switches naturally from the "head voice" to the "chest voice" without forcing. A combination of the two voices is what is desired in good singing.

Young children can lift their arms up in the air and lower them as the sigh goes down. It can be slow and fast to vary it. Have them echo you.

Far Away Sirens by SingBabySing™

Age: All

The rules:

- Tell them that the game is to see how softly they can hum without opening their mouths.
- Indicate that they listen and then echo back to you.
- You will stop if they sing with you instead of after you.
- You may choose to give them a non-verbal signal to for the echoing
- Start with a soft, low siren sound on the "m" consonant, keeping your mouth closed and making the sound go up and down slowly. Do it with them.

Procedure:

1. Make exaggerated funny faces while you're all humming. Move your lips, cheeks, eyes and jaw, but keep humming softly and slowly with your mouth closed. Get them to play with you. You control the speed, not them. They need to follow you at first so they can also learn that it's a privilege to lead.
2. When their attention wanes, lie down on your back (if you have room) and get them to join you there while you hum and look up at the ceiling. Then look from the ceiling to them and back and forth several times, still humming.
3. When they begin to lose interest, get up and tiptoe around the room, using hand signals to join you. Keep humming the slow siren sound with your mouth closed. Move freely up and down stairways, under tables, in and out behind doors or any place at all.
4. Pretty soon you'll all want to hum a real tune, so pick one that's gentle and sing it softly with them, perhaps joining hands and moving in a circle. Remember...it's a mesmerizing game.

Calling Mommy

• As above, but with "Mmmmmaaaaaaawmmy" (elongated mommy) instead of "em." Stretch the first consonant and vowel sounds as you spin your voice up and down. Repeat several times.

MawJaw • Pick a note and softly sing "Maaaw-maaaw-maaaw."

• Keep a steady beat and gently touch your lap, shoulders or toes while singing.

• Repeat several times, taking a breath when necessary.

• Sing it on other pitches too or use a familiar nursery song and substitute "maw" for all the words, e.g., sing "row, row, row your boat" like "maw, maw, maw, maw, maw."

Nyah, Nyah, Nyah, Nyah, Nyah! By Laura Pihowich

Age: All

Best for resonance which is not nasal in the bad way, instead it is nasal form resonating naturally into your nasal cavities, not by the tongue

pressing the epiglottis or hard palate on the top. Look for a “concave” tongue that rests relaxed at the bottom with the tip touching the front lower teeth.

- Echo so–mi–la patterns (pitch singing patterns that children naturally use) using “nyah” (pronounced *ñya*) syllables. An example pattern would be: “so–mi–la–so–mi”.
- Sing a *Nyah* syllable on any pitch and open to “AH” which should be sung in the same pitch.
- Sing a *Nyah* sound on any pitch and then go up an octave (or high pitch) opening to “AH” and go back to the original pitch still on “AH”.

Cat Conversations by Janice Smith

Ages: 3–5 adaptable for older ages (2nd grade)

One or ideally two teachers demonstrate pretending to have a cat conversation with only meows.

For 1st and 2nd graders: To learn about question marks and periods. It is fun to have them identify when cats are asking questions or making statements. Have students work in pairs to have their cat conversation for one or two minutes.

Older students: Enjoy a context to use. i.e. First cat is trying to sell something to the second cat.

Seasonal sounds for resonance warm-ups:

Adapt the warm-ups incorporating Halloween sounds for October such as “oooo”, Ghost calls, witch laughter, bat squeaks or goblins “eeee”. For November sounds have turkeys gobbling at High, Medium and low for baby turkey, mom and dad turkeys. For December sounds have snowmen (baby, mom, and dad) saying or singing “ho, ho, ho”. Have children feel their belly bouncing as they say the “ho, ho, ho”. This will activate the diaphragm muscle.

Siren–conductor for music reading–readiness by Laura Pihowich

Age: All

Have a student be the “music conductor” with a baton or just the hand. The Conductor draws the way the siren should go, up or down in the air. Students sing siren sounds following the conductor’s hand and stop when he/she stops. On another day you could transfer the same thing to actual drawing on the board. This would be music pre–reading.

Buzz a melody for breath support by Janice smith

Age: Good for all but difficult for younger children

Breathing deeply, have students echo you (repeat after you) phrases or short sections of a song as you are trying to teach it to them initially. Demonstrate it by “buzzing” the melody as supposed to singing it with the words or other neutral syllables. See if they can buzz/sing it back in only one breath. You will focus only in the melody and will help learning the correct pitches and as a bonus it will teach good support.

3. Piggyback Songs

When using known tunes for your teaching songs, make sure they are in the range of the children’s voices. Good Piggyback songs use only a three to five note range, generally from D to A above middle C for 4 to 5 year olds and Middle C to B for older children up to about 9 ear olds. Not all children are limited to this range but this is proven to be safe for most young children (Trollinger, 2007). Examples of good Piggyback tunes are Merrily We Roll along, London Bridge and Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. Out of the range, students will sound out of tune in those pitches. Don’t force it. You then could start a bit lower if the pitches go to high or higher if the pitches go too low. There is no evidence that singing low will affect their voices, but singing too high could.

Letter Game to a known tune such as *Where is Thumbkin* by Deb Renner Smith (Independent Literacy Consultant). You could also do this one to a *so-mi-la* melody for younger students.

Age: 5-6-7

Procedure:

Every child has a letter card that is large enough to hold up and show the other students. All the children are sitting in a circle on the rug. The teacher sings:

With a known tune *"Where is Thumbkin?"*: (for Kindersingers or 1 or 2nd grade singers)

Teacher: *Where is letter "A" Where is letter "A"?*

(The student(s) with letter sign(s) show it):

Student (s) sing: *Here it is. Here it is.*

Teacher sings: *Tell me what the sound is. Tell me what the sound is*

Students: "A, A, A" "A, A, A"

Age: 4-5

With so-mi-la-so-mi Melody:

Teacher sings: *Who has the letter "A"?*

Student: I have the letter "A"!

Teacher: Tell me how it sounds?

Students: "A, A, A"

To see Bibliography supporting the activities above please refer to the *Resource and Articles about Singing* document attached.

Hope you enjoy these activities and find them useful for your children's happy singing!