



Discover how to boost your vocal range by more than 8 notes with the world best selling and most effective Vocal Training

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Contents

Introduction.....	3
The Starting Line.....	4
Understand How Your Voice Works--the "Vocal Athlete".....	7
II. The Game Plan.....	17
III. Training Camp.....	19
IV. Game Day.....	28
Choosing Repertoire.....	31
V. In Conclusion.....	31
Recommended Reading: Singing Made Simple.....	32

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Introduction

Learning to sing well is much like mastering any physical skill. It takes time, effort, and training. Just as athletes spend many years practicing their sport, singers must invest the time to hone their art. Think of yourself as a "vocal athlete", training to achieve whatever goal you have set for yourself.

Like great athletes, most great singers are born with a genetic predisposition to talent. But that innate ability isn't enough by itself. It takes discipline, motivation, and hard work to turn your natural aptitude into prosperous success.

If you're a beginner, this book will help you start to develop your vocal talent. If you've already had some training and experience, you may find some helpful suggestions. You shouldn't expect immediate results, but if you work diligently you should see progress over time.

We'll outline the steps to becoming a vocal athlete. After assessing your voice at the "Starting Line", you'll create a "Game Plan" that details your goals and development strategy. You will then progress to "Training Camp", which includes exercises designed to improve your voice and increase your range, and finally to "Game Day", which focuses on performance and vocal maintenance skills.

Good luck, and have fun!

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The Starting Line

Before working to improve your vocal skills, it's a good idea to first explore and assess your vocal instrument.

Speaking Voice vs. Singing Voice

Singing and speaking are closely related. In fact, your speaking voice can teach you a lot about your singing voice, and the two can help or hinder one another.

Your Speaking Voice

Let's start by exploring your speaking voice. Try making various non-speech sounds: laugh, cry, yawn, sigh. If you have a piano or pitch pipe available, find the pitch that's closest to the sounds you made. Now speak a few monosyllables: uh-huh, mm-hmm, aha. Again, find the matching pitch on a piano or pitch pipe.

Now speak a few simple sentences, such as "my name is _____" or "I love to sing", and find the matching pitch. Many people make the mistake of trying to speak at a lower pitch than is natural for their voice. Ideally, the pitch should be the same for speaking as it is for

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monosyllables or non-speech sounds.

Continue exploring your voice by speaking monosyllables at various pitch levels on a piano. Find the lowest pitch you can speak without sounding gravelly. (The gravelly sound is called "vocal fry" and is not healthy to sustain.) Your ideal speaking pitch should be about four to five steps above your vocal fry level.

Next, speak sentences or read a paragraph aloud, experimenting with higher speaking pitches. See how high you can go. Along the way, note where your voice is most comfortable and where you start to hear and feel strain.

Your Singing Voice

Voice Type

The first step in assessing your singing voice is determining your natural voice type. There are four main voice types: soprano and alto (contralto) for women, and tenor and bass for men. Within each type are subtypes, such as mezzo-soprano or baritone. However, during the course of training, it is possible to change from one type to another.

In general, sopranos and tenors have a higher range than altos and basses, but this is not the only determining factor of voice type. Tone quality is also a defining characteristic. Lower voices tend to have a deeper, richer chest resonance, while higher ones are lighter and brighter.

The highest voice type is the soprano. The most common subtypes of soprano are the lyric (1st) and the mezzo (2nd). Both can usually sing the same range, but the lyric soprano has a lighter tone and more power in the upper range. The mezzo's tone is a bit deeper and more powerful in the lower range.

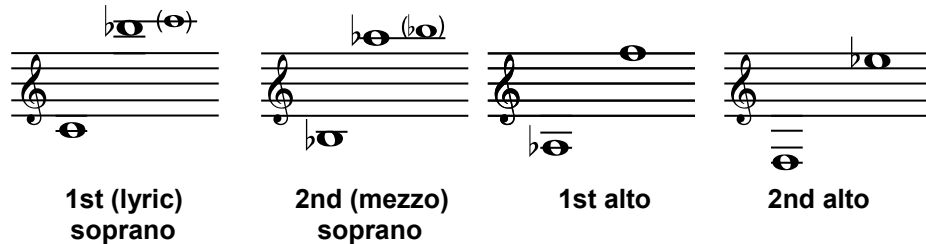
The soprano repertoire used in most high schools and church choirs is written for lyric and mezzo sopranos. Some lesser used soprano subtypes include the coloratura--a very high, light, agile voice--and the dramatic soprano, distinguished by a wide range with power throughout. Both are usually found only among highly trained opera singers.

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The lowest female voice is the alto (contralto); it is subdivided into first and second altos. The first alto's tone is warm and rich, while the second alto is darker and heavier. Many untrained female singers begin training as first altos and discover that they are actually mezzo or even lyric sopranos.

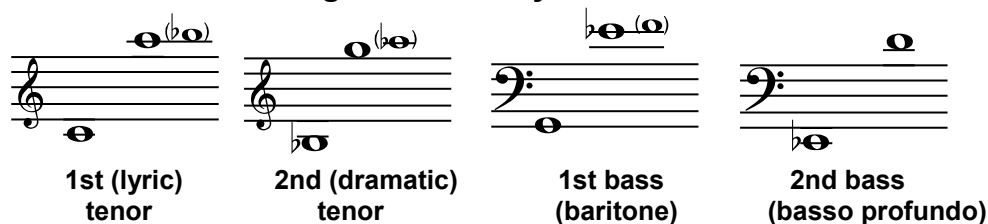
Female Vocal Ranges Commonly Used in Choral Music



The high male voice is the tenor, subdivided into lyric or dramatic. The lyric tenor is the "leading man" voice used in many musical theatre roles. Most male pop/rock singers are also in this category. The dramatic tenor has a heavier but more resonant tone and is better suited to classical and operatic works.

The lowest voice is the bass, subdivided into baritone (1st bass) and basso profundo (2nd bass). The baritone has a light, popular, lyric quality, while the basso profundo is low, heavy, and powerful. Many untrained male singers begin training as baritones and find out they are actually lyric tenors.

Male Vocal Ranges Commonly Used in Choral Music



So, your initial voice classification is only a starting point. Record yourself singing a song you know well that has a comfortable range. Listen to your tone and try to objectively describe it: light, heavy, dark, or bright. In what part of your range do you have the most power and confidence? Do you like the way your voice sounds? Most people are unpleasantly surprised the first time they hear their own recorded voice.

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Listen to recordings of professional singers of various voice types, and see whose tone quality is most similar to yours. Below are some examples:

Dramatic soprano:	Anna Netrebko
Coloratura soprano:	Mariah Carey
Lyric soprano:	Céline Dion
Mezzo soprano:	Jennifer Hudson
First alto:	Taylor Swift
Second alto:	Miley Cyrus
Lyric tenor:	Michael Bublé
Dramatic tenor:	Plácido Domingo
Baritone:	Josh Groban
Second bass:	Tennessee Ernie Ford (here's a link to some of the songs he recorded before he died in 1991: http://www.last.fm/music/Tennessee+Ernie+Ford)

Recordings of the other listed singers should be easy to find online.

Range and Tessitura

Your vocal range is the total number of notes you can sing. The average untrained singer has a range of about one-and-a-half octaves--twelve notes. With some training, most singers can achieve two or perhaps two-and-a-half octaves.

Tessitura is your *comfortable* range, in which you can sing the notes consistently, on pitch,
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and without strain. The term is also used to describe the average pitch range of a song or choral part.

Many mezzo-sopranos, for example, can sing an occasional high C at the top extreme of their range, but their tessitura is probably an octave to half an octave below that: perhaps from the A above middle C to the second A above middle C. If they attempt to sing a piece in which the tessitura is from high G to high C, they will experience vocal strain and fatigue.

The key is locating your own tessitura and choosing songs with the same tessitura. If you try to sing higher than your natural tessitura, you run the risk of straining your voice.

To get an idea of your existing range and tessitura, try singing some arpeggios and scales. See how high and how low you can go on a piano, and notice the points where you begin to feel strain or hear a reduction in tone quality.

Remember, this is only the starting point from which you will measure your forward progress. So if your range isn't very large right now, don't let that worry you.

Understand How Your Voice Works--the "Vocal Athlete"

How We Produce and Perceive Sound

Tuning the human voice is not as simple as tuning a piano or guitar. On those instruments, the tension of each string is adjusted to vibrate at the correct frequency for the desired pitch. To understand pitch and tuning, it helps to know a bit about how sound is transmitted and how our ears perceive it.

Without getting too technical, sound is a wave--a back-and-forth movement of air pressure with three properties: wavelength, frequency, and amplitude. Wavelength and frequency determine the pitch, and are inversely related to one another. Amplitude determines the volume (loudness) of the sound.

A pitch we perceive as *high* has a shorter wavelength and greater frequency than one we

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perceive as *low*. When a sound wave strikes the tympanum (ear drum), the vibration causes tiny hair cells in the cochlea (inner ear) to generate a nerve signal that is interpreted by the brain as sound.

All musical instruments have a mechanism to generate sound and a resonating chamber to amplify it. In the human voice, the mechanism is air flow across the vocal folds and the resonating chamber consists of the nose, mouth, and throat (collectively called the *pharynx* and subdivided into the *nasopharynx*, *oropharynx*, and *laryngopharynx*).

How Our Voice Works

Our voices produce sound as air from the lungs flows across our vocal chords (which are actually vocal folds). We control the pitch of our sound in two ways:

- 1) by the placement of the tone in our resonating chamber.
- 2) by the tension of the folds as air passes over them, controlled by tiny muscles in the throat

The human voice has three qualities of sound: pitch, volume, and timbre. Pitch measures how high or low the sound is, and is determined by the larynx; volume indicates how loud or soft it is, determined by the lungs and breath muscles; and timbre refers to the resonance of the sound, determined by the placement of the tone in the resonating cavities.

Below is a diagram of the anatomy of the human vocal tract. You can refer back to it later when you're learning how to make it work.

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