



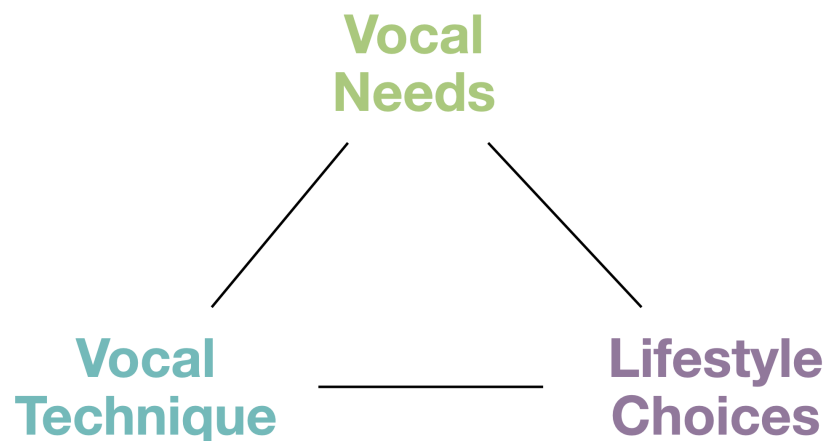
Vocal Focal:

Warming Up and Caring for Your Voice

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Your voice is an important part of who you are and crucial for communication, whether in speech or in song. Yet, we seldom ever think about how to take care of our voice and how to keep it optimal. Let's explore some of the concepts covered in our video to help you understand your own voice and how to take better care of it.

Three simple things to remember when it comes to voice care—your **vocal needs**, **vocal technique**, and the **lifestyle choices** you make. These three things will impact your voice.



1. Vocal Needs

How you would care for your voice depends on your day to day vocal demands. By considering the **frequency** (how often), **intensity** (duration of use, volume, vocal weight, timbre) and **context** (physical space, social dynamics, amplification) of using your voice, we can have a clearer picture of how to use our resources to structure practice, voice use and rest.

For example, teachers may need to use their voice five days a week for at least 3-5 hours a day at moderate to high volume to engage a group of students in a noisy classroom environment. Additionally, they have to consider when they are using their regular speaking voices during social interactions outside of work. Through better understanding of their vocal demands and capacity, they can know how to use and care for their voice more optimally to avoid frequent vocal fatigue.

2. Vocal Technique: Balance & Ease

In the *Vocal Focal: Warming Up and Caring for Your Voice* video, we explored how healthy vocal technique starts with the concept of **balance** (0:48)—between the breath you use and your voice. If too much air is pushed through your voice, it will struggle to keep stable. The resulting effect would be an increase in tension in your throat.

On the other hand, if you were trying to sing higher by increasing the effort in your throat, your lungs are going to have to work really hard just to speak! If you learn how to balance the breath you use and your voice, there should be a certain **ease and fluidity** to using your voice, much like how an experienced swimmer glides through water.

In the physical exercises (1:28), we explored how building **kinaesthetic awareness** allows us to have more ability to optimise the use of our **breath flow, phonation, and physical coordination** to vocalise with ease. You can practise the exercises in our video in this manner for **familiarity** and to grow your awareness of the contrast between tension and ease of being.

Try this out!

Jelly Swaying Movement
(Duration: 1 – 1.5 mins)

- a) Focus on connection across body
- b) Notice areas of tension that you may wish to gently release

The exercises taught in the video (3:19) belong to a larger group of exercises called “**semi-occluded vocal tract**” (**SOVT**) **exercises**. You can find many examples online.

Some examples of SOVT exercises you can explore for warm ups include: humming, humming through a straw, lip trills, and even voicing out vowels like “oooooh”. Lip trills happen to be our favourite because it also encourages our face muscles to relax.

Try this out!

Thoracic and Facial Stretch + Breathing

- a) Hold each position for 5 secs
- b) Enjoy the release for 5 – 10 secs
- c) Repeat each stretch and release sequence 3 – 5 times

For the pitched exercise (4:32), other than the ‘ba’ syllable sung in the video, you can try using the following to familiarise with **different vocal postures and timbres**:

1. Lip trills
2. Z---, v---, m---
3. “Geh” (as in “**get**”)
4. “Loo”
5. “Meow” (like a cat)

3. Lifestyle Choices

Making good decisions about some basic lifestyle choices can have a huge impact on your voice. **Drinking enough**, and **resting your voice** will help you tremendously.

i. Water

Hydration is crucial for voice health.

How much?

- Drink between **1.6 to 2 litres of water per day**, depending on your vocal needs.
- Listen to your body and drink often, in small amounts



*Icon created by Freepik

ii. Rest

Your voice is like any other part of the body—overuse it, and you risk injury.

How much rest?

- Vocal rest means you avoid speaking - not even whispering
- Rest it for a much better chance of **recovery**.
- Be aware of how much you are using your voice.



*Icon created by Ivan Abirawa

What if you lose your voice?

Rest and drink more water!

Occasionally, despite our best efforts, we might still lose our voice to a viral infection or overuse. In that case, just **stop talking for a day or two until your voice returns**. Do not get into the habit of whispering, as that might injure your voice further. If your voice loss or voice change persists, it is important to **seek medical help**. It might be necessary to check if anything else can be done.