

Introducing Singing for Adults

Welcome to the Introducing Singing for Adults course at Waltons New School of Music.

This course is designed to take some of the mystery out of singing, improve your confidence in singing before an audience and introduce you to the fundamentals of voice training. We ask you to keep four important things in mind as you begin:

1. **The more you put into the course, the more you will get out of it.**
2. **Communicate with your teacher** if there is an area you're having difficulty with or something you don't fully understand. Your teacher is here to help you, so don't hesitate to approach her if you're having difficulty with anything.
3. **Have patience.** Although we all want to sing songs, the voice is a complex instrument, and we need to concentrate on healthy and effective vocal production to begin with. Remember, good technique is the backbone of good singing!
4. **Listen to great singers.** Doing this should be an inspirational rather than frustrating ('I'll never be able to do that') experience!

Practice

Practice is an essential aspect of any music course, and we all know the phrase 'practice makes perfect'. Yet even the most eager learner might cringe when told to practice daily. Perhaps the most challenging aspect of learning to sing is developing a healthy, productive approach to practice. Your teacher will give you guidelines on how and what to practice, but the real work is up to you, and mostly on your own time. Here are three tips:

1. **Aim to practice every day.** Even a small amount of daily practice is much more effective than a long practice session the day before your next class. Make practice a part of your daily routine. Determine when is the best time for you to practice. If you like practicing in the morning, get up 30 minutes early so that you won't be late for work. If you're an evening person, do your practice before going to bed or while you still have the energy in the evening.
2. **Practice for at least 20 minutes.** Why 20 minutes? We find that this is a manageable time for beginners. Note that 20 minutes refers to warm-ups, workouts and work on the material itself. You will also need to spend 5 minutes on breathing and 5 minutes on cool downs (see below). That means you should try to set aside at least 30 minutes a day for practice sessions – a reasonable length for most adult students. As your interest and skill level grows, you will find that your daily practice time will also increase.
3. **Focus on your practice.** Effective practice requires concentration and focus. If you are rushing to do it or are distracted by other things that need doing, you won't get much out of it. Try spending a few minutes in silence beforehand to clear your head of other concerns. Starting the session with deep breathing can also help. Doing focused practice means that you are thinking of only one thing at a time, almost like meditating on the individual elements of technique.

Vocal Warm-ups & Workouts

While learning to sing songs is what this course is about, vocal warm-ups and workouts are an essential part of any vocal training.

Working with and improving your voice requires regular exercise, and like any exercise, warming up is necessary to get your body (or your voice) in the right shape to begin with. You wouldn't start running without first stretching and warming your muscles, so give your voice the same courtesy. You will not only begin classes with vocal warm-ups; you should also warm up at the start of each practice session.

Vocal workouts refer to exercises that help you to develop the required muscles for good vocal production. Because they are often simple in nature, you can focus more on technique without getting caught up in the lyrics or tapping into the emotion of the song. Just as an athlete develops other muscles in the body, as a singer you need to develop your larynx, diaphragm and internal muscles to work more efficiently and support air flow. As these become stronger, your voice will too. Workouts also help to prepare your voice for a safe and healthy singing performance.

After your warm-ups and workouts, you can turn to the song you are currently working on. Focus on the basics – the melody line and rhythm – first. Knowing the song inside out will help you to relax about that aspect, so you can focus on expressing, delivering – and enjoying! – the song when the time comes to perform it.

Finish each practice session with a gentle cool down, such as gentle humming and slides.

Breakdown of a Suggested 30-Minute Practise Routine

- 5 minutes: breathing and focus
- 5 minutes: warm-ups
- 5 minutes: workouts
- 10 minutes: song work
- 5 minutes: cool down