

# Breaking the Singing Barrier:

## A Systematic Approach to Overcoming Singing Anxiety in Instrumental Music

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### Teacher Tips for Vocal Health

- **Warm up in the car on the way to work**
  - Make your voice last longer throughout the day
- **Using a straw try these warm-up exercises:**
  - Ascending warm-up (*Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, Fa, Mi, Re, Do*): Stay in your “comfort register”
  - Descending warm-up (*Sol, Fa, Mi, Re, Do*)
  - Ascending Arpeggios (*Do Mi Sol Do Do Do Do Sol Mi Do*)
  - Vocal Siren: Slide from your lower register to the top of your upper register and back down. Take your time.
- **Sing without a straw**
  - You can create a similar experience by singing on the “oo” vowel using the warm-ups above.
- **Carpool karaoke**
  - Gently sing along to your favorite song.
- **Hydrate**
- **Drink Lemon**
- **Rest Voice**

### Singing Voice Considerations:

- **Bass Clef Speaking Voices or Changing Voices**
  - Sing in a “comfort range”
  - Have changing voices sing the chord root or a drone in their register
  - Use a lighter voice when singing: Avoid asking students to sing louder
- **Student “Comfort” Ranges :**
  - Ages 8-10: Bb3-F4
  - Ages 11+ : A3-A4 (Treble Clef Speaking Voices), F3-B3 (Bass Clef Speaking Voices)

### Create an environment of singing opportunities:

- **Include singing as part of the classroom routine**
  - Begin at the beginning of the year
- **Don't force singing**
  - If a student doesn't want to sing, let them sit. Over time, they'll join.
- **Refrain from overusing the word “sing!”**
  - Try using “Repeat after me”, “Hum this”, “Say this”
- **Group singing**
  - Sing as an ensemble. It can be anxiety inducing to sing in smaller sections. Over time, sing in smaller groups.
- **Teacher as model**
  - You are the expert! If you sing confidently, students will sing confidently.

## Breaking the Barrier

- **Vocalizing:** Sound outside of the body
  - **Rhythmic Chanting**
    - **Conversational patterns**
      - Greeting (You: “*Good morning everyone!*” Class: “*Good morning*”)
    - **Speaking Rhythms**
      - Kodaly (Ta, ti-ti, ti-ki-ti-ka)
      - Counting
      - Clapping
      - Neutral Syllables (Da, La, Ba)
    - **Finger or Shadow Bowing while chanting**
      - Speak the rhythm while fingering or shadow bowing
  - **Tongue Twisters**
    - *Whether the weather is cold or whether the weather is hot, we’ll be together whatever the weather, whether we like it or not.*
    - *Unique New York. New York’s Unique. You know you need unique New York.*
    - *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers*
- **Hum:**
  - **Teacher models humming during lesson**
    - Students become familiar with hearing singing in the rehearsal space.
  - **Call and response**
    - Model small passages first, then have students repeat after you.
  - **Lip buzz/Lip trill**
    - Students sing a passage using lip buzz.
    - *NOTE: This may be difficult for some students. Have them put their fingers next to the corners of their mouth and push up to relax the lips to make the buzz sound. If unable to, have them say it on a “V” sound.*

Do Re Mi Fa So Fa Mi Re Do Re Mi Fa So Fa Mi Re

Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do Re Do Ti La So Fa Mi Re Do

- **Common intervals**
  - Practice or demonstrate intervals by just humming and then having students practice them.

- **Sing:**

- **Neutral Vowels**
  - Sing on Dah, Bum, Loo
- **Use Solfege**
  - Sing using a scale
  - Sing an arpeggio as part of the warm-up

do do re do do re mi re do do re mi fa mi re do do re mi fa sol fa mi re do do re mi fa sol la  
sol fa mi re do do re mi fa sol la ti la sol fa mi re do do re mi fa sol la ti do ti la sol fa mi re do

- **Use a Kazoo**
  - Use as a fun alternative activity in class.
- **Sing against a drone**
  - Have a section drone the root of the chord on their instrument and then have the rest of the ensemble sing their part over that.
  - Common interval exercise:

Do Re Do Mi Do Fa Do Sol Do La Do Ti Do Do Do  
Do Ti Do La Do Sol Do Fa Do Mi Do Re Do Do Do  
Re Mi Re Fa Re Sol Re La Re Ti Re Do Re Re Re  
Re Do Re Ti Re La Re Sol Re Fa Re Mi Re Re Re

- **Sing ensemble warm-ups in your existing curriculum**
- **Sing Chorales**