

# Vocal Exercises

Levels 1 - 6 ♦ Female

by

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## Level 1 ♦ Female

Exercise (Notated in beginning key.)	Limits & Beginning Pitches <sup>1</sup>	Alternate Vowels <sup>2</sup>	Additional Instructions	Reason for Exercise
<p>1</p>		<p>yah yay</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get a good expansion and lift.</li> <li>• No <i>h</i> sounds between notes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes basic support reflex coordination: expand-lift → phrenic nerve stimulus → closure of the glottis.</li> </ul>
<p>2-a</p> <p>2-b</p>	<p>1st Time 2nd Time</p> <p>1st Time 2nd Time</p>	<p>2-a yah yay</p> <p>2-b nyoo</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modify toward an <i>oo</i> vowel with each ascending step above middle c.</li> <li>• <i>Legato</i> (i.e. smooth and connected) movement from pitch to pitch.</li> <li>• No <i>h</i> sounds between notes.</li> <li>• <b>2nd Time:</b> hold first note momentarily, then move through the exercise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages flexibility in the vocal folds.</li> <li>• Establishes basic open-throat set for both the lower register (2-a) and the upper register (2-b).</li> </ul>
<p>3</p>	<p>1st Time 2nd Time</p>	<p>yah</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modify toward an <i>oo</i> vowel with each ascending step above middle c.</li> <li>• Keep the four pulses on the top pitch connected.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops antagonistic inhalation/exhalation support coordination.</li> </ul>
<p>4-a</p>	<p>1st Time 2nd Time</p>	<p>yoh → → yah → →</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First three notes <i>staccato</i> (i.e. short and detached).</li> <li>• Do exercise twice at each pitch level.</li> <li>• Change to <i>yoh</i> when you reach high f#.</li> <li>• Change to <i>yah</i> when you reach high a.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops the rhythmic expand-lift / phrenic-nerve support connection.</li> <li>• The quick, <i>staccato</i> attack of each top note establishes the new mechanism set.</li> </ul>
<p>5-a</p>	<p>1st Time 2nd Time</p>	<p>yah yay</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand (i.e. take a breath) and lift before attacking each bottom note.</li> <li>• Sing as if <i>legato</i> with a bump accent on each note—top note first two times is <i>staccato</i>.</li> <li>• Modify toward an <i>oo</i> vowel with each ascending step above middle c.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops the rhythmic expand-lift / phrenic-nerve support connection.</li> <li>• Develops antagonistic muscle strength between the inhalation and exhalation muscles.</li> </ul>
<p>6</p>	<p>1st Time 2nd Time</p>	<p>—</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slide down through all pitches.</li> <li>• When you reach the bottom pitch, change from an <i>oo</i> to an <i>oh</i> vowel to access the lower register. (Do not try to smooth the register transition at first.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages elasticity in the vocal folds for <i>legato</i> development.</li> <li>• As the exercise moves to the bottom note, the registration transition is developed.</li> </ul>

➔ Repeat exercises 2-a through 6. Use the "2nd Time" Limits & Beginning Pitches.

<sup>1</sup> The diamond-shaped notes indicate the Beginning Pitch of the first note of the exercise. The regular notes indicate the Limits (i.e. the highest and lowest notes sung during the exercise.) The Beginning Pitch may also be one of the Limits.

<sup>2</sup> Use the Alternate Vowels only when instructed to do so.



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## Using The Exercises

"In the quest for efficient and coordinated vocal function, these exercises build the foundation upon which the musical artist will begin to emerge. Along this path of development, never should any vocal technique become a replacement for your musical ear and good taste." —TRB

1. When using these exercises to improve your vocal technique, always consider **coordination to be your initial objective**. A vigorous effort is needed; however, brute force is not the answer. Always be aware of the goals of efficiency and endurance. As you become stronger and better coordinated, use only the amount of energy necessary to produce a clean, resonant sound. This conservation of energy, because of increased efficiency, should result in greater endurance.
2. **Vocalize any of the exercises only as high or as low as you can do so without undue stress or strain**. When you are using the *Vocal Exercises*, stop singing when an exercise changes to key which is too high or too low, and rest until it moves back into a comfortable key (or the next exercise begins). As you develop you should be able to attain the limits indicated in the exercise tables; however, moderation in the beginning is the key to steady growth of the voice.
3. **Always do the exercises in order** (as outlined in the exercise tables and as recorded on the *Vocal Exercises*). They are in this order to establish the coordination and strength of each muscle group progressively. Always start with Exercise 1, even if your last practice session ended in the middle of the exercises.
4. **Faster is not necessarily better** when doing the exercises. Take your time; a short rest period between exercises is important.
5. **Do not overload the voice**. Sing under the interference (i.e. reduce the power, or volume, until the interference subsides) and then add power one degree at a time. Develop this process into an automatic stimulus/response behavior.
6. **Hold the jaw**. All exercises must be done with the jaw held in an open position and in a minimum state of tension. This is done by squeezing the cheeks gently inward between the upper and lower molars. (Use whichever hand is more comfortable.) In this position, the constrictive action of the swallowing muscles is negated and pharyngeal resonance is increased. There is also an increase in supraglottic pressure which balances the subglottic support pressure. By establishing these conditions, you can more easily produce the desired results of greater vocal efficiency and coordination. Consistent exercise under these conditions "reprograms" and strengthens the vocal mechanism so that the improvements are gradually realized during artistic singing (i.e. while no longer holding the jaw).
7. **All of the exercises have one basic reason to be used**. However, as each exercise is refined, many facets of vocal production can be developed.

## Vowel Considerations

1. In the beginning, all of the vowels will tend to be much alike and somewhat muddy. This is necessary to develop an even vocal line. As you advance, the integrity of each vowel will be developed by the proportional adjustment of the resonators.
2. With the jaw held open as described above, a pure *oo* vowel cannot be produced. It will sound more like an umlaut vowel (*ü*). If the lips pucker (as they do when producing a pure *oo* vowel), the throat may be closing instead of opening. As you develop the ability to approximate the *oo* vowel while holding the jaw, you are developing independence between the muscles of the lips, tongue, and jaw.

3. The *y* prefix (as in "yoh") is, in effect, an *ee* vowel ("ee-oh"). The *ee* vowel requires the highest and most forward position of the tongue, thus establishing greater pharyngeal resonating space during the attack of the tone. Forming the *y* prefix while holding the jaw, though somewhat awkward at first, develops flexibility of the tongue muscles and independence between the tongue and jaw muscles.
4. The *ny* prefix (as in "nyoo") encourages the nasopharyngeal resonance needed when vowels are sung at or above middle *c*<sup>4</sup>. The *n* sound—an open-mouth hum with the tip of the tongue against the roof of the mouth—establishes an opening between the soft palate and the back wall of the throat. This opening is necessary for nasopharyngeal resonance to occur. By moving from the *n* sound directly to the *y* vowel (described above) and on into the main vowel, a more efficient resonating space is realized.

## Vowel Modification

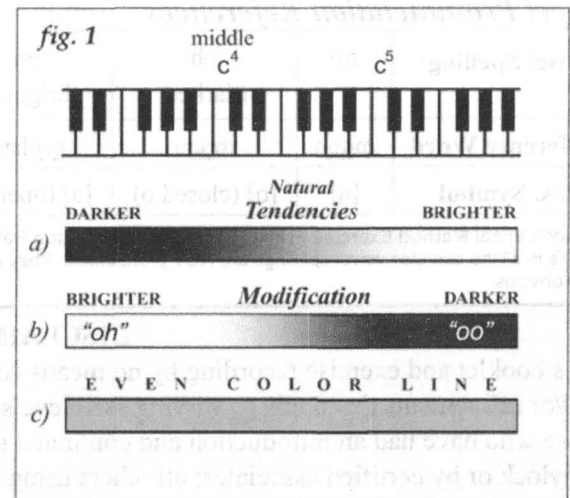
Your range may be extended by modifying the vowels to gain a combination that will tune the pharyngeal cavities. It is very important to realize that all vowels are combinations of each other; and that in establishing good vocal production, these combinations establish the needed resonator adjustments.

The objective of vowel modification is to establish balanced registration and an even color line throughout the voice. You must offset the natural tendencies of the voice to get bright, harsh, and shrill as it goes higher; dark, dull, and muddy as it goes lower (fig 1-a). When modifying vowels, exaggerate the opposite of these tendencies: sing a darker sound as you go higher; a brighter sound as you go lower (fig. 1-b).

**Vowel Modification for the Exercises.** As the pitch goes above middle *c*, modify the exercise vowel toward the *oo* vowel (i.e. darker). The higher it goes, the more you modify (darken) the vowel. As you go downward from these higher pitches toward middle *c*, gradually *unmodify* from the darker *oo* sound back to the original pure vowel. Going downward below middle *c*, modify the exercise vowel toward a brighter sound. The lower it goes, the more you modify (brighten) the vowel. These rules are the same for all voices, both male and female.

### Example of Vowel Modification for the Octave of Balanced Registration:

Consider middle *c*<sup>4</sup> and downward as white; *c*<sup>5</sup> (an octave above *c*<sup>4</sup>) and upward as black. All the pitches between *c*<sup>4</sup> and *c*<sup>5</sup> become the modifications between white and black, i.e. the shades of gray (fig. 1-b). Let the white represent the *oh* vowel; the black, the *oo* vowel; and the shades of gray, the modifications between *oh* and *oo* chromatically throughout the octave. In doing any exercise, this modification is very important for the development of proper registration, resonance, and an even color line (fig. 1-c).



## Glossary

**even vocal line / even color line:** a condition of the voice in which the overall sound quality is consistent from one vowel to another as well as from one pitch to another. *Color line* is more specific than *vocal line*, referring to a particular sound quality: every style of music has an appropriate color line.

**glottis:** the space between the vocal folds; (*vocal folds* is synonymous with *vocal cords*).

**interference:** any aspect of the sound which is not clean and resonant.

**optimum tone quality:** a fully resonant sound, sung as brilliantly as possible without being harsh or shrill.

**overloading the voice:** singing too loud or too long, resulting in stress, strain, or interference.

**pharynx** (pronounced *FAIR-inks*): the vertical space above the larynx (*LAIR-inks*). Ideally, the majority of resonance occurs within the pharynx which is divided into three regions: the *laryngopharynx* (the space immediately above the larynx), the *oropharynx* (the space at the back of the mouth and behind the tongue), and the *nasopharynx* (the space above the soft palate and behind the nasal passages). —**pharyngeal:** of or relating to the pharynx.

**phrenic** (*FREN-ick*) **nerve:** a nerve centered in the diaphragm, stimulated by the lift of the abdominal bulk against the diaphragm on the attack of the tone. This action (support) initiates the closure of the glottis.

### registers and registration

**upper register:** from the highest note in the voice down through  $c^{\#4}$  (just above middle  $c^4$ ).

**lower register:** from the lowest note in the voice up through  $c^5$  (one octave above middle  $c^4$ ).

**balanced registration:** the ideal coordination of the upper and lower registers. In balanced registration, the transition between middle  $c^4$  and  $c^5$  (known as the *octave of balanced registration* or *balanced octave*) is as smooth as possible.

**resonation:** the amplification of the vibrational wave of the vocal folds. The optimum point of resonance for each pitch is achieved by the use of specific vowels and their modifications.

**support:** the opposition of the inhalation and exhalation muscles (which results in the closure of the glottis and increased subglottal and intrathoracic pressures).

### Vowel Pronunciation References

Vowel Spelling*	oo	oh (darker)	oh (brighter)	aw	ah	eh open	e (a) closed	ee
Reference Word	moon	moan	orphan	jaw	llama	bet	che	see
I.P.A. Symbol	[u]	[o] (closed o)	[ɔ] (open o)	[ɑ]	[a]	[ɛ]	[e]	[i]

**Blaylock Vocal Method Exercise Primary Vowel Pronunciation References (based on Italian vowel sounds).**  
The *h*'s in all the exercise vowel spellings are NOT pronounced. They are included only to make the pronunciation of the vowels more obvious.

### DISCLAIMER

This booklet and exercise recording by no means contain all of the information, strategies, and/or refinements that apply to varying skill levels of vocal technique. They are for use only by those who have had an introduction and continued guidance to vocal production by Thomas R. Blaylock or by certified associates; all others using this material do so at their own risk.