Voice Training Notes for Practice

These notes are compiled from Kaiser Permanente Washington (GHC)'s visit notes and from the College of Saint Rose. They are typeset again here so that they could more accessible.

1 Bootstrapping

1.1 Vocal hygiene: Make sure you are:

- Drinking plenty of water.
- Using adequate breath support through **diaphragmatic breathing**.
- Avoiding vocal strain, particularly when speaking loudly.
- Keeping a journal or have a handy tool to record your progress.

1.2 Pitch: Identify the voice frequency (pitch) that you will be attempting to maintain. Reference for frequency ranges:

- Masculine: 85Hz to 180Hz
- Gender neutral: 140Hz to 170Hz
- Feminine: 165Hz to 255Hz

In the beginning, it would be helpful to start at somewhere in the gender neutral range, and slowly increase the baseline going forward. Use an app like Voice Tools or a tuner to identify a note (e.g., F3) that you can reference later.

2 All Voiced

2.1 Warm-Up: Holm-molm-molm-molm-molm, as a sigh.

Use good breath support and ensure that voice is being projected forward.

2.2 Holm-molm-molm-molm-molm, on a sustained pitch.

What is the pitch that you have chosen?

2.3 Holm-molm-molm, but:

1. Slow-fast-slow.
2. soft-loud-soft on the sustained notes.

2.4 Holm-molm-molm, as speech. Pretend you are saying a sentence, but only use the intonation and not the actual words.

Vary rate, pitch, and loudness. Make the connection from the abdominal muscles to the lips.
2.5 Chant the following voiced phrases on a particular note:

- Mary made me mad.
- My mother made marmalade.
- My mom may marry Mary.
- My merry mom may marry Mary.
- Marvin made my mother merry.

2.6 Over-inflect these phrases as speech.

3 Voice-Voiceless Contrasts

3.1 Mmapapapa. Vary rate, on a particular note.

3.2 Mmapapapa.

1. Slow-fast-slow.
2. soft-loud-soft on a particular notes.

3.3 Mmapapapa, as speech. Use non-linguistic phrases, like “mmapapapa?”, “mmapapa!”, and “mmapapapa.”.

3.4 Chant the following voiced phrases on a particular note:

1. Mom may put Paul on the moon.
2. Mom told Tom to copy my manner.
3. My manner made Pete and Paul mad.
4. Mom may move Polly’s movie to ten.
5. My movie made Tim and Tom sad.

3.5 Over-inflect these phrases as speech.

4 Phrases with Meaning

4.1 Do chanting on a note, over-inflecting, and natural speech for these phrases:

- All the girls were laughing.
- Get there before they close.
- Did you hear what she said?
- Come in and close the door.
- Are you going tonight?
- Put everything away.
- Come whenever you can.
- We heard that yesterday.
- The player broke his leg.
- The children went swimming.
For the next set of exercise, focus on where you feel the energy of your voice for each word that you say.

- Count from 1-10
- Count from 70-80
- Count from 170-180
- Say the months of the year
Say these sentences. After each sentence, stop and reflect on how it felt. Did it feel
easy and free? Did your voice "drop off" at the end?

- Turn it down.
- I took a nap at noon.
- It began to rain at noon.
- Gene ran for senator and won.
- Lawns need rain to remain green.
- Ben turned the fan on in his van.
- Not one crane was seen before noon.
- Don and Jean went on their honeymoon.
- Gene is a lean, mean, running machine.
- The chicken noodle soup is nearly gone.
- My neighbors painted my new barn in only one day.
- My arm is numb.
- Come to my summer home.
- Marlene can roam a shopping mall all morning.
- Our home team will meet the Mets on Monday.
- Meet me in my room at the same time tomorrow.
- I've made up my mind; we may move to Maine.
- Mark and Mona will be married in the middle of May.
- Come with me and have some of Mom's marvelous homemade jam.
- Many men were mining.
- Mama made lemon jam.
- Mary made muffins every morning.
- His ears buzzed.
- He bruised his knees.
- His nose is as red as a rose.
- His shoes are the wrong size.

5 Notes: Resonance
Resonant voice is often an effective way to produce strong, rich vocal projection
while maintaining relaxed shoulders, neck, jaw, tongue, and lips. Some describe
resonant voice as less effortful, buzzy, focused, and/or "easy." With this technique,
you will utilize your body's natural resonance to produce a rich, "free" voice which
much less muscular effort.
1. Sit as tall as you can with your head resting comfortably. You should be able to move your head easily from side to side. Take care not to slouch or raise your chin in the air. Once seated comfortably with your arms resting at your sides and your shoulders relaxed, take a few deep belly breaths. When exhaling, maintain a continuous breath stream. If you feel any resistance in your chest or neck while exhaling, take a few more breaths until you are exhaling freely. You are now ready to begin to explore your resonant voice.

2. To begin, gently allow your lips or tongue to trill without voice. You should feel the air gently bubble through your lips without effort from your neck or throat. After this feels easy, and your throat feels very open and free, add your voice. Does this change the effort in your throat? See if you can do the trill without any pushing or effort from your throat, neck, or shoulders. Now that you are producing an easy trill, see if you can vary the pitch up and down the musical scale. Does it still feel free?

3. Now that you’ve warmed up and feel relaxed in your neck, throat, and jaw, lightly start humming at a comfortable pitch. Do you feel “buzzing” or vibratory sensations in your head bones and facial tissue?

4. After warming up, practice with the exercises in Section 2.

6 Notes: Inflection
Inflection refers to the change in pitch when we say a word, phrase or sentence. We use inflection all the time to distinguish questions from statements and to add meaning to what we are saying. You can practice inflections producing words like the ones below:

Stretch the words out (like you are doing glides), exaggerate the sounds and notice your pitch change:


The main textbook describing voice modification for people in the transgender community (Adler, Hirsch Mordaunt, 2006) has a nice visual for inflection in English sentence:

Normal inflection in English (for declarative sentences) follows this pattern. Try it; notice how your pitch is changing. Is the change easy or effortful? Can you do it without movement of your shoulders? Remember, you do not need a deep breath to do this.

Now try to follow this pattern with the following sentences. The italicized word is the one that you should ”jump” on. It is suggested that the beginning word (“walk”) is produced with a gender neutral or female pitch:
• Your car is running.
• The store is open.
• I can’t stop by.
• We tried to visit.
• The water is running.
• My shoes are tight.

7 Notes: Articulation

Research suggests that the perception of a female voice can be enhanced when a speaker produces:

• Easy (breathy) voice onset.
• More precise (“correct”) production of speech sounds.
• Light articulation contacts.
• Continuous, flowing speech (linking).
• Vowels that are longer in duration.
• Increased lip spreading.
• Forward tongue carriage.

Here are some ideas that may be useful to you, in order to stretch your articulators a bit:

1. Exaggerated chewing: pretend you have 4-5 pieces of gum in your mouth at one time. Chew without making sound, and then try to chant a bit while you produce the chewing motion.

2. Massage your cheeks, with or without chewing

3. Alternating lip movements: go from lip rounded (kissing) to lips spread (smiling). Do this several times in a row: be slow and deliberate. Really stretch.

4. Repeat lists like the days of the week or months of the year. Do slowly and with exaggerated movement. One SLP who works with performers suggests doing this while lightly biting down on your tongue while you stick it out.

5. Yawn-sigh: attempt the most authentic yawn you can imagine. As you exhale, sigh “ah” and hold it out for 3-5 seconds.