

THE 10 MINUTE WET VOCAL WARM-UP

Voices need exercising just like bodies do. You wouldn't expect to perform well in a sport if you didn't warm up your muscles first. You shouldn't expect to get an audience's attention in a boardroom without warming up your voice first.

How do you warm up your voice?

The actor, Morgan Freeman is famous for voicing thousands of commercials and narrations and advises this:

"One thing I can tell you – if you're looking to improve the sound of your voice – yawn a lot. Yawn a lot. It relaxes your throat muscles, relaxes your vocal cords, and as soon as they relax the tone deepens. The lower your voice is the better you sound."

It takes a lot of massages, hot baths, and, yes, yawning to drop most women's pitch down into the lower resonators.

When you tighten a string on a violin the pitch gets higher. When you tighten up your neck and shoulders – your pitch gets higher and higher and it often feels like you'll never be able to lower it.

The reason the warm-up below takes place in the shower is because we know how pressed you are for time. It's not always easy to devote even ten minutes to forming new habits – so we've given you some vocal exercising to do while you take your shower. These will increase your volume, vocal range and clarity.

The warm up

When you step into your shower let the hot water relax your shoulders and the back of your neck. Roll your shoulders, stretch your neck down and up and side to side. Now yawn hugely even crinkling up your nose while you do it. Feel the muscles at the back of your throat stretch and tone. Keep picturing your throat as being a wide-open channel for sound with no obstructions.

Indulge in relief and gratitude for the shower by sighing out loudly - no pushing - just letting the sound fall out of you like the water falling from the showerhead – this sound should reflect the very genuine feeling of ‘letting go’ and ‘relief’ that you have.

Start to wake up your speech muscles – blow through your lips like a horse, run your tongue around the inside of your lips. Close your lips and smile widely then kiss forward. Smooth down your jaw with the heels of your hands.

Now move on to humming to increase vibrations with your teeth apart and the back of your throat feeling like the yawn.

Feel with the palms of your hands where you’re vibrating – in the bones of your face? On your lips? In your chest? Encourage that feeling of vibrations in the chest, throat, mask of face, even the top of your head. Notice how different notes resonate in different areas. Relish the feel of vibrations between your lips. Open your lips halfway through your humming and release the vibrations out your mouth.

Combine blowing through your lips on sound, humming, and an open sound in any order you like. Keep playing with sound – holding it back with a hum, freeing it out your mouth, rolling it over your lips.

It’s essential that you become familiar with and enjoy the making of sound and that you relish the sensations of vibrations in your body. You’ll begin to look forward to sending those vibrations out to the room you’re in and into the ears of your listeners.

Now run your voice up and down the scale. Notice how the high-pitched sounds resonate in your head and the lower pitches resonate in your throat and chest.

Next – for clarity – count to ten with your tongue outside your mouth. This feels and sounds silly but is the most effective exercise for opening your jaw and limbering up your lips. Repeat the count several times with your tongue right outside your

mouth and working your lips to be as clear as possible. Now put your tongue back inside your mouth and again count to ten. What did you notice?

By opening your jaw and waking up your lips your diction becomes much much clearer. You actually feel more committed to whatever you're saying – even if it's just counting to ten – because of this action.

Now sing.

That's right. Sing. At the top of your lungs. Choose a favorite song or emulate a favorite singer and sing out to your heart's content. Love the sound of your own voice.

The warm up

- Roll your shoulders,
- Stretch your neck down and up and side to side.
- Yawn
- Sigh out loudly.
- Blow through your lips like a horse,
- Run your tongue around the inside of your lips.
- Close your lips and smile widely then kiss forward.
- Smooth down your jaw with the heels of your hands.
- Hum with your teeth apart and the back of your throat feeling like the yawn.
- Open your lips while humming
- Blow through your lips on sound, hum with closed then open lips in any order you like.
- Run your voice up and down, higher and lower in pitch
- Count to ten with your tongue outside your mouth.
- Put your tongue back inside your mouth and again count to ten.
- Sing.