

# How to warm up the voice – scientific method

History - There are literally dozens of idea's and procedures on how to “warm up” the voice in today's vocal music circles. All of them have one thing in common, they are the evolution of traditional voice lessons. That's not to say that they're bad, they're just passed on from one generation to the next without a consideration of what they do to the voice. Science is invading the traditional vocal world by storm and revealing more exact and precise methods to extend range and ability. Some of the old warm ups can actually stress the voice rather than allow it to vibrate freely. So let's look at a scientific approach to warming up.

We will concentrate on vocal agility and vocal beauty without strain. It's easy to sing loud but to learn to sing quiet and loud equally well takes getting the voice to relax and sing quietly first.

1. If you walk into rehearsal in the evening YOU ARE MUSCULARLY WARMED UP, you've been talking all day and if you have children most likely you've been raising your voice (volume) all day as well.
2. In order to get the voice to do muscularly what it's supposed to do naturally when singing, a muscular warm up is the first thing you should do in the morning.

A. first a couple of deep breaths when you get up and get that yawning feeling in your throat (Open vestibular folds/ false vocal folds)

B. then slowly engage the voice with very quiet little sounds in the center of your range, this is to get the muscles working after being asleep for the whole night. When you're asleep the voice like any other muscle relaxes and swells slightly. Getting up and talking loudly before a small vocal “stretch” will set your voice in yell mode all day and is stressful all day on the muscle as well.

C. start sliding vocally first towards the bottom of your range, be sure to have a “thin/sotto voce” or very quiet sound when doing this making sure not to get louder as you stretch to the bottom of your range. Don't go all the way down to the bottom of your range until your voice relaxes into the mode of stretching the vocalis muscle. This will allow the greatest range of your voice at both quiet and loud singing.

D. Next begin to stretch from the middle range to the top range, still being quiet so as not to stress the vocalis muscle and to gain control.

*Note: While it is very tempting to sing louder as we go higher or lower you must work hard to relax and not push the voice as it “warms up”.*

E. Once you have achieved a fair amount of your normal range do steps A-D a little louder then repeat them all a little louder each time.

If you follow this routine every morning you will notice that your range will become more extended and you'll be able to hit difficult notes much more comfortably than you could before. It's very easy to install this in your morning routine.

# Why

So why does this method work so well? It's very simple, the vocalis muscle is more easily stretched when you're not trying to push air through it in a "full voice" mode. In full voice mode the vocal chords are tightening to put resistance on the amount of air that you push through your lungs, this makes the voice louder in conjunction with laryngeal position, epiglottis, soft palate....etc. It's the same as if you jumped out of bed and ran 4 miles without stretching or warm up. So we stretch the vocalis muscle by singing the extension of our range quietly before we tighten the muscle for volume. When we do start to tighten for volume we do it gradually so that we don't reduce our range at the same time. This practice done regularly WILL extend your range and even make your tone much more relaxed and open for choral blending.