

# OVER THE RAINBOW

*A step-by-step guide to singing*



**B B C**



*The A to OZ guide to singing...*

Welcome to the *Over the Rainbow* guide to singing. You've seen the show, now it's time to have a go yourself.

Whether you're an absolute beginner, or haven't sung in a while, it's never too late to get into singing.

Singing can give you courage, get your heart pumping and might even boost your brain power!

Read on for warm-up exercises, singing tips and who to contact if you want to take the next step.

Remember, you can sing anywhere – on the sofa, in the shower, or with your friends on the road!

Since the BBC and I collaborated on our first theatre casting show "How Do You Solve A Problem Like Maria?", I have been astonished by the number of people wanting to take part in musical theatre – this booklet is for you. Have fun and keep singing!

**Andrew Lloyd Webber**



# Getting started

## Posture

Good posture will help you make a good sound:

- Stand up straight - imagine a string pulling you up from the top of your head.
- Place your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Look straight ahead.
- Keep your shoulders down.
- Try to relax - tension will prevent you from making a good sound.

## Breathing

Breathing well will support your voice. Developing good breathing takes practice and patience:

- Breathe deeply from your lower lungs - imagine a rubber ring around your waist. Breathe in and try to push the ring outwards.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose and mouth.
- Avoid raising your shoulders as you breathe in - keep them relaxed and level.

### A simple exercise to try:

Lie on the floor on your back with your hands on your stomach. Breathe in (inhale) and your hands will rise. Now breathe out (exhale) and they will lower. In this position it is virtually impossible to breathe incorrectly. Try to breathe in the same way when you sing.

# Warming up

## Your body

Singers are like athletes: they need to warm up before they perform.

- Shake out your body to loosen up.
- Slowly stretch your arms up to the ceiling and then reach down to the floor.
- Roll your shoulders backwards and then forwards.
- Very gently roll your head from side to side - don't push too hard or you may strain your neck.

## Your voice

Warm up your voice to avoid straining and damaging your vocal cords.

- Breathe out through your mouth releasing all the air from your lungs.
- Once your lungs feel completely empty, relax your stomach muscles, open your mouth and let the air flood back in. Do this several times.
- Now breathe in again and when you release the air add an "sss" sound. See how long you can hold it.
- Try this again using "shh" and "fff" sounds. This will warm up your mouth and vocal cords, and help to build different vocal muscles.



# Find your voice

Now you've warmed up, it's time to find out what your voice can do.

**Range** (the highest and lowest notes you can sing)

- Sing the note that comes most naturally to you.
- Gradually take the pitch up to the highest note you can sing without straining.
- Now take it all the way down to the very lowest note, again without straining.
- You can also try the above with a line from a song, raising or lowering the pitch each time you repeat it. Have a go with:

*"Where troubles melt like lemon drops."*

## Volume

- Choose a comfortable note and sing "Ahhhh".
- Start as quietly as you can and slowly build in volume (remember to breathe!).
- You can also use sounds from your favourite songs. Try using the "ha" from:

*"Ha ha ha, ho ho ho, and a couple of tra la las."*

## Articulation

- Sing the line below 20 times in a row. Focus on making sure each letter and sound is clear every time.

*"Ding dong! The witch is dead. Which old witch? The wicked witch!"*

### Try this:

Start with a note that's comfortable for you and slowly go up and down like a police siren throughout your vocal range, with an "ng" sound. Breathe as slowly as possible, and snatch a breath when you run out, trying to ensure an even, continuous sound. Try different variations: with your lips buzzing together, with your tongue trilling, or "ooh"ing.

# Practice makes perfect

## Practise your breathing and vocal exercises regularly.

Even a little will help - ten minutes of regular practice can make a big difference. A gentle warm-up each day will increase your lung strength and capacity.

- Put on one of your favourite CDs and sing along to a song that you know well. Choose songs that have a familiar, simple melody and a limited range.
- Take passages of songs apart and really think about the words and sounds you are singing.
- Listen to yourself. Are you making a good sound? Are you in tune? Train your ears as well as your vocal muscles.
- Try improvising - use a line from a familiar song as a starting point and play with the notes and rhythm.
- Try a tricky song or a difficult note - it may be tough, but this is a great way to develop your technique and range.
- Be brave. How about singing in front of a friend for feedback?
- For inspiration, check out different genres, musicians and composers at your local library, or at: **bbc.co.uk/music**
- And tune in to *Elaine Paige on Sunday* on BBC Radio 2 every Sunday from 1pm to sing along to songs from the musicals.
- For more singing tips, visit: **bbc.co.uk/sing**



## What next?

If you're thinking of taking your singing to the next level, you may want to try singing lessons. There are also lots of online resources available to help you improve.

**BBC Blast**  
**[bbc.co.uk/blast/music\\_audio](http://bbc.co.uk/blast/music_audio)**

Top tips for budding young musicians.

**BBC Learning**  
**[bbc.co.uk/learning](http://bbc.co.uk/learning)**

Find courses in your area.

**BBC Radio 2**  
**[bbc.co.uk/radio2](http://bbc.co.uk/radio2)**

Listen to Radio 2 sessions and find upcoming events.

**BBC Radio 3**  
**[bbc.co.uk/radio3](http://bbc.co.uk/radio3)**

Discover music, drama and events on Radio 3.

**BBC Sing**  
**[bbc.co.uk/sing](http://bbc.co.uk/sing)**

Free online downloads, singing tutorials and links to other singing websites.

**Incorporated Society of Musicians**

**[www.ism.org](http://www.ism.org)**

Search for tutors vetted by the Incorporated Society of Musicians.

**LEA Music Services**  
**[www.federationmusic.org.uk](http://www.federationmusic.org.uk)**

Find your local music service.

**Sing Up**  
**[www.singup.org](http://www.singup.org)**

Ideas and resources to get children singing.

**The Music Industries Association**

**[www.mia.org.uk](http://www.mia.org.uk)**

Tips on how to choose a music teacher and other useful contacts.

## Sing together

Performing with others is a great way to build your confidence and improve your technique.

Look out for posters advertising local musical theatre groups and choirs in libraries, community centres, music shops, or in your local paper.

### Useful contacts

**British Choirs on the Net**  
**[www.choirs.org.uk](http://www.choirs.org.uk)**

Search over 2,000 choirs around the UK.

**Making Music**  
**[www.makingmusic.org.uk](http://www.makingmusic.org.uk)**

Find a music group in your area.

**Scottish Music Centre**  
**[www.scottishmusiccentre.com/directory](http://www.scottishmusiccentre.com/directory)**

Find music organisations, venues and choirs based in Scotland.

**The National Operatic and Dramatic Association**  
**[www.noda.org.uk](http://www.noda.org.uk)**

Use the online map to find groups in your area.

**The National Youth Music Theatre**

**[www.nymt.org.uk](http://www.nymt.org.uk)**

Find out about musical theatre workshops for young people.



*“You don't have to have lessons to enjoy singing - grab some friends for a sing-along to build your confidence.”*

Jodie Prenger

To make sure a tutor is right for you or your child, you should start with a telephone call to find out more about them. Do they specialise in a particular style of singing? Are they experienced at teaching singers of your level? Can they supply references?

### The BBC Performing Groups

The BBC Singers and the five BBC orchestras perform around the UK throughout the year. They also provide the musical backbone to BBC events such as the BBC Proms.

You can listen to their concerts regularly on BBC Radio 3 and BBC Radio 2. They run fun, free music activities for people of all ages and musical abilities.

Visit their websites for more information about the groups and to find workshops, events and performances in your area:

[bbc.co.uk/orchestras](http://bbc.co.uk/orchestras)  
[bbc.co.uk/singers](http://bbc.co.uk/singers)



### Funding musical talent

The BBC Performing Arts Fund is a charity dedicated to supporting aspiring new musical talent.

Previously called the Fame Academy Bursary, the fund was set up in 2003 to support potential talent through different music schemes. The charity is funded by voting revenue from BBC shows including *Over The Rainbow*.

Over £3 million has so far been awarded for Musical Theatre, Urban Music, Education Bursaries and Instrument and Equipment Awards.

To find out more about the awards and how you can apply for a bursary, visit:

[bbc.co.uk/performingartsfund](http://bbc.co.uk/performingartsfund)



*“You need to work hard on your technique beforehand, so that when it comes to the performance, you don’t need to think about it. Everything should just come naturally, leaving you free to concentrate on delivering the lyric.”*

Charlotte Church



*“Keep an eye on your posture. It doesn’t matter if you are singing to yourself in the mirror at home or to an audience of thousands, a good straight back and relaxed shoulders will make all the difference to your sound.”*

John Partridge

*“When you sing, go to the centre of what you are doing, think about the meaning of the words rather than just presenting a performance, then it works.”*

Sheila Hancock



# “Why then, oh why can’t I?”

*It’s never too late to get into singing.  
This guide gives tips and advice on how to get started.*

With thanks to the BBC Singers,  
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Free downloadable versions of this  
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at [bbc.co.uk/dorothy](http://bbc.co.uk/dorothy)

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