What I've Learned About Improving Your Singing

by Mark Cole

I have worked with average to great singers on the road, in the recording studio, in church and other musical settings for many decades. Here is what I have learned so far about helping singers improve:



1. Learn to Breathe Properly

Learning to breathe deeply and with control is the foundation of singing. I played saxophone for many years and that really helped develop my lungs and diaphragm. The diaphragm is the muscle that controls pushing the air from your lungs. Here's a link to help develop your breathing.

2. Warm-up your voice before singing

As a worship leader, one of my main times to sing is Sunday morning. Unfortunately, it takes time to warm up your voice and mornings are not always the best time. One of my favorite tricks while driving to rehearsal, is to sing along with the songs on my MP3 player in a soft voice, sometimes down an octave. It took me around twenty minutes to drive to church, so it was a great warm-up. Here's a good YouTube warm-up video.

3. Sing every day

Like most things in life, you improve by doing it daily. Do not be shy about singing in your car or singing around your house. When I was on the road and we were singing and performing 6-7 times per week, it was amazing how strong our voices got. Use it or lose it.

4. Copy your favorite singers

There are many different kinds of singers and styles of music. Most singers start off by copying a number of their favorite artists and then develop their own style from there. That is normal. So get out your favourite recordings and copy their tone, inflections and vibrato. Copying great singers is one of the best ways to learn and grow.

5. Take singing lessons

Sometimes you can only go so far on your own. A good teacher will help you with breathing, tone, intonation, posture and a host of other important details. You still have to practice every day, but they will help correct the things that you may be doing wrong.

6. Learn how to project your voice when you sing

You can't sing loudly if you do not breathe properly. I remember having an internationally known opera singer visit my house. I asked her to sing and it felt like house shifted on its foundation from her awesome tone and volume. Good tone comes from learning how to project your voice. Go for it! Don't be shy, sing loud! Here are some online tips.

7. Learn to sing with passion

Great singers know how to sing with emotion. If you love a song and sing it from your heart, it should show in the emotions that you present. It should show in your stage presence. As a singer who loves to worship God, there are few things as powerful as singing with passion to the Creator of the universe! Here are some online tips on how to improve.

8. Learn to listen for pitch problems

Few things are worse than someone singing out of tune. Learn to sing along with your favorite recordings or with your piano and really try to match the pitches. Practically everyone can learn to sing in tune with constant practice and listening. Here's a link to help with those pitch problems.

9. Drink lots of water

Keeping your voice healthy and lubricated is important! Room temperature water is the best way to keep your voice well lubricated. Avoid caffeine, dairy products and alcohol before you sing. Those liquids generally hurt more than they help.

10. Record yourself singing

Generally speaking, no one likes the recorded sound of their voice. But, listening to recordings of yourself is the best way to really hear what you sound like. It is the best way to pick up on how well your pitch, vibrato and breath control is. Don't be discouraged because you sound different than your voice sounds in your head. That is a common problem for everyone. Keep listening, keep growing, keep improving!

Question: What things have helped you improve your singing? What areas are you currently working on?



Mark Cole: Jesus follower, Husband, Father, Worship Leader, Writer, Pastor, Church Consultant, Founding Arranger for Praisecharts.com, squash & tennis player, blogger & outdoor enthusiast (biking, hiking, skiing).

The article above and many additional insights may be found on Mark's blog at http://markcole.ca/

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