

STUDENT PRESENTATION GUIDE

VOCAL

MISSION

To elevate the ability of those gifted and involved in the worship arts through information and recommendations that are both empowering and quickly accessible.

PURPOSE

By being better prepared for the experience of God's presence, leaders, vocalists, musicians, and worship team members will be able to use their God-given gifts more effectively, resulting in the changed lives of their listeners and furthering the gospel of Jesus Christ.

VISION

To come alongside pastors, worship pastors/leaders, youth pastors, and their churches, giving support to and having influence on as many musicians, volunteers, and technical team members as God has prepared worldwide.

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How to Use Your Student Presentation Guide

With your Student Presentation Guide, you now have access to a variety of materials. These materials allow you to access and learn valuable information related to your presentation—and your worship ministry as a whole now and in the future. Whatever your particular area of gifting, you can find expert tips and recommendations from worship and music industry professionals to improve your specific worship/arts gifts and skills.

Section 1 covers Selection—how to choose ideal song(s) for you or your team’s style, gifts, event, and audience. Section 2 offers help in Communication—ensuring you know the message you want to convey and can find the most effective way to do so. Section 3 deals with Presentation/Technique—not overlooking any aspect of how to employ the proper technique in your musical area to create the best possible presentation of your song(s) and message. Finally, Section 4 wraps it up with Effectiveness—how to assure you do everything you can to effectively bring God’s message to listeners through your performance.

You’ll find the information easy to access. Each chapter lists a number of steps in bold, with an expanded explanation following. These short, organized chapters are filled with tips, instructions, and help for all aspects of your musical gifting and potential future ministry. The table of contents lists each of the smart chapters so you can quickly locate what you want to work on at any given time.

One thing you’ll find in each Student Presentation Guide is repetition. Many areas of musical preparedness overlap, but it’s been proven that repetition is a great way to really learn! So, as you read through your guide, continue to take in all the tips and recommendations with determination and passion as you explore and improve your gifts.

Those who created this guide for you desire that this be a place to discover, develop, and deploy your gifts—and that as a result, your upcoming presentation gives you a goal to work toward as you press on toward God’s gifting and calling in your life now and in the future.



SELECTION

INTRODUCTION

Choosing the right song with the right arrangement is pivotal in song performance. Songs need to represent who you are as a team and what you want to say. In fact, nothing else reaches people more than presenting a great song and singing it well.

Choosing the right song for the right occasion is not only important for you but for your audience. You should be prepared with material regardless of the environment in which you are singing. Developing a range of songs for any given occasion will bring value to you as a singer. So, make sure to listen to as many songs as possible to find the right ones for you. Don't exclude the possibility of writing it yourself! You'll never know until you try.

Sometimes you can find the right song but maybe it's not your style. Know you can always change up the style and look for another arrangement. Many songs are recorded in different styles with different arrangements. Make sure to choose a great song in a style that showcases your gifts best.

Last but not least, make sure you pay attention to lyrics. Make sure to bring a message that is powerful and relevant to your audience—a message you believe in.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Selecting the right material is crucial for the success of a performance. Finding the right song to display your vocal ability and communicate what you want to say is imperative.

01. MAKE SURE TO LISTEN TO PLENTY OF SONGS IN ORDER TO FIND THE RIGHT ONE TO SING. CHOOSE A SONG YOU LOVE AND CAN REALLY RELATE TO. ALSO CONSIDER WHERE YOU ARE SINGING AND WHAT KIND OF SONG WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR THAT VENUE AND AUDIENCE.

02. DON'T RULE OUT WRITING YOUR OWN SONG. REMEMBER, SONGWRITING IS PROBABLY THE MOST LUCRATIVE PROFESSION IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY.

03. MAKE SURE TO PERFORM THE SONG IN THE ARRANGEMENT THAT WILL SHOWCASE YOUR VOCAL ABILITY BEST. YOU CAN ALWAYS CHANGE THE ARRANGEMENT OF A SONG TO BETTER SUIT YOU.

04. MAKE SURE TO ALSO PERFORM THE SONG IN A STYLE THAT IS BEST FOR YOU. YOU CAN ALWAYS CHANGE THE STYLE OF A SONG FROM THE ORIGINAL STYLE IT WAS RECORDED IN.

05. CHOOSE A SONG WITH A POWERFUL AND RELEVANT CHRISTIAN MESSAGE—AGAIN, ONE THAT YOU BELIEVE IN AND ARE EXCITED TO SHARE WITH YOUR AUDIENCE. FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU CHOOSE A LOVE SONG, CHOOSE ONE THAT EMPHASIZES PURE INTENTIONS AND TRUE LOVE.

06. MAKE SURE TO FIND THE RIGHT KEY IN ORDER TO DISPLAY YOUR VOCAL RANGE. ALWAYS CHOOSE A COMFORTABLE KEY TO GIVE YOU SOME PLACE TO GO IN YOUR HIGHER REGISTER.

Appropriate

The first thing to understand in making the appropriate song selection for a presentation or worship event is that you need to choose the song(s) that best represent you—as a person, a vocalist, and a Christian. Below are some things to consider when selecting a song.

1. Choose a song in your range and register.

Make sure a song is in your range and register by finding both the lowest and highest note in the song on a piano or guitar, and practice hitting those notes without straining. Even if you are working on increasing your range, be careful to pick a song that is in a comfortable key for you. Even if you choose a song to stretch your vocal range, make sure you don't have to strain to hit any notes.

2. Choose a song that is appropriate for the occasion.

If you are singing in church, consider that listeners would probably like to hear worship. If you are singing at a wedding, you'll likely select a wedding song. However, don't hesitate to ask what type of music is appropriate for a certain occasion and/or audience if you're unsure.

3. Choose a song that reflects your style.

There isn't anything wrong with singing other styles, but typically a singer has one or two styles they sing best. Don't rule out changing the style or arrangement of a song to suit you.

4. Choose a song that lyrically represents who you are.

Make sure you understand the lyrics to the song and believe what you are singing. Don't sing it if you don't believe it!

5. Don't rule out writing your own song.

If you cannot find the right song to sing, consider writing your own. If you choose to have other musicians behind you, make sure they can play the proper arrangement, or you can just sing it a cappella. You'll never know if you can write a song until you try!

6. Do song research.

Listen to as many songs in as many styles as you can to help you choose the right one. Often one song is recorded and arranged in multiple styles. Be careful when downloading music that you adhere to all copyright laws stated by the music services you use.

7. Let industry professionals help you choose a song.

A vocal coach, music teacher, or other music industry professional can help you choose the right song and will be honest in doing so. Try to ask for input and advice from people outside of family members and good friends.

Arrangement

1. Research different styles of music.

Music is created, performed, and recorded in countless styles. Listen to as many styles as possible to see what interests and suits you best. Don't be afraid to try a style of music you have never sung before.

2. Find an arrangement to suit your style.

Figure out what style you sing best and look for an arrangement that fits that style. Try playing with different arrangements by singing the song with piano, then with guitar. Also try experimenting with different rhythms.

3. Play with different tempos.

You can speed up a song to an up-tempo arrangement or slow it down to a ballad. Use a metronome to speed up or slow down and still keep time.

4. Set the rhythm of a song.

Many arrangements start with a simple rhythm. Find different rhythms or beats to use as an idea. An easy way to experiment with this idea is by using a drum machine on your computer.

5. Think about instrumentation.

Do you want an acoustic or electric set? Do you want guitars, piano, or classical instrumentation? Do you want percussion? If so, what kind? Consider all the possible instruments for your arrangement and then choose what will work best with your song and style.

6. Find your best key.

You can raise or lower a key of a song to best fit your vocal register. Always try to start in a comfortable key to give yourself somewhere to go higher, but also consider whether the song will modulate (change keys) during the song.

7. Consider the number of voices.

Are you singing alone or in a group? If you are singing alone, do you want background singers and how many? Remember, if you include background singers you will need a vocal arrangement for them. It's helpful to find singers who already blend and sing well together.

8. Have an intro and an ending.

Make sure to rehearse your intro and ending so you know when to come in and when you are ending. Give the musicians a cue, such as a predetermined hand movement that isn't distracting to the audience, to let them know when to end. Don't drag the song on. Leave the audience wanting more.

9. Consider an acoustic arrangement.

Sometimes simple is best—just your voice and piano or guitar.

Christian Message

1. Be a Christian.

Don't sing what you don't understand. To sing a Christian song, you must be a Christian. To be a Christian means to follow Christ: accept Jesus into your heart, confess Him as Lord, and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead and you will be saved (Romans 10:9)! Anyone can stand onstage and profess to be a Christian, but it is more important to live a life worthy of that title. You don't have to be perfect; just be real.

2. Don't sing it if you don't believe it.

There are things we believe and don't believe as Christians. Make sure you agree with the message you are singing.

3. Make sure the song is spiritually sound.

Don't hesitate to look to your Bible and check that the lyrics and message are in line with the Word of God. Look up words in the dictionary if you don't understand them, and make use of the concordance in your Bible. Check with leadership if you are unsure if the song lyrics are biblical and/or fit the event you were asked to sing for.

4. Know your audience.

Are you singing to Christians who know the Lord? Are you singing to nonbelievers to teach them about the Lord? Is it a combination? Your audience's spiritual status will help determine the type of message you need to convey with your song choice.

5. Know your ministry.

Is your ministry evangelical, prophetic, worship, motivational, etc.? What specific area of ministry are you interested in? What is your heart? What drives you? Who do you want to help? The answers to these questions will help you choose which message you have the greatest passion to share with your audience.

6. Have a testimony.

Very few things are more powerful than a song with a testimony behind it. If you have a testimony, sharing it can be as simple as writing it down and reading it aloud. If you are a songwriter, you can base your song on your personal story. If you are looking for songs, keep your testimony in mind when looking for songs.

7. Study the Word.

One of the most important things about singing a song with a Christian message is having an understanding of what it says. One of the ways to increase your knowledge and understanding is through the Word of God. Read the Bible every day, study it with others, enroll in Bible classes at your local church. Make sure to set aside time to spend in the Word of God.

Vocal Range

1. Determine your voice type.

Find a vocal teacher or coach who can help you determine your voice type and discuss how you can increase your range. Are you alto, soprano, tenor, baritone, etc.? Once you know your type, be willing to work.

2. Start with warm-up and vocal exercises.

Vocal exercises must be done with proper technique. Start with lip trills—place your lips together, teeth apart and lightly blow through your lips. Keep your lips blowing evenly; don't blow too hard, like trying to inflate a flat tire. Hold your cheeks together to help maintain a steady vibration of the lips. Make the sound “uh” behind it. Don't worry about pitch accuracy with this exercise at first. Try to do the entire exercise without “disconnecting” suddenly into a lighter production.

3. Work lower register.

Be careful not to lower your head to reach low notes. A great exercise that helps bridge the gap between registers is the creaky voice. Imitate a creaking door, and notice how it immediately connects your lower and upper registers.

4. Work upper register.

Be careful not to lift your head to reach high notes. Drop your jaw and don't tense up. If you use too much air as you approach higher notes, your outer muscles will activate and will stop the movement of your lips and tongue. If this happens, bend forward as you approach the top notes of the exercise (listed above in number 2), then return to your standing position at the end. The anticipation about singing the higher notes will likely be lessened because bending forward toward the floor will make you think you're going “down” instead of “up.” You can do this exercise whenever you find yourself straining, or “reaching,” for notes.

5. Work middle register.

Work between the upper and lower registers to bridge the gap. Starting in your chest, just below your break area, make a sound (with your lips closed) like a squeaky door hinge and inflect into your head voice. Be careful not to break into falsetto or a breathy sound. The point is to keep it connected so you don't notice where your break falls.

6. Work entire register.

Work your entire register until all are connected and become one voice. Use the same squeaky door or “edge” sound, and this time add a little “whimper” or “cry” to help keep the cord connected without overdoing it. You don't want to over-compress the air, so use just enough to keep the connection as you sing higher. More doesn't always mean better for this particular exercise.

7. Do not push air.

Don't push air past your vocal cords for style purposes. This will result in vocal fatigue and loss of range. To make sure you are not pushing out too much air, stand close to a mirror as you sing and see if it fogs up. The higher you sing, the less air you should use.



COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

The main reason for singing or performing music is to communicate an idea. You want an audience to feel what you feel through the song. The true purpose for music is to minister to the soul. If music doesn't strike a chord, what good is it?

You can connect with your audience in many ways. Don't be afraid to use what you have to communicate your message. Use your hands, arms, and facial expressions when singing. Make sure to stand confident, relaxed, and self-assured. Be bold and fearless. Find different ways to engage the audience. Remember, most audiences will do what you ask them to do, so don't be afraid to encourage their participation.

If you are a choir, work to ensure you are on the same page and in one accord. There is power in unity and in becoming one voice.

Finally, remember that if you are a Christian presenting the gospel, this message is truly a matter of life and death. Hopefully this will push you to do what is necessary to communicate the message to your audience clearly and effectively.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Communicating the gospel through a song is all about preparing yourself. Each chapter in this section is of equal importance. Practicing these concepts and applying it to your life will bring great results.

01. LEARN COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS TO CONNECT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE. LEARN TO OVERCOME ANY FEAR AND INSECURITY THAT MAY COME WITH PERFORMING IN PUBLIC.

02. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTICE YOUR SKILLS. LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SING AND PERFORM IN FRONT OF AN AUDIENCE.

03. MAKE YOURSELF VULNERABLE AS A PERFORMER, AND LEARN TO SHOW YOUR EMOTIONS THROUGH SONG. USE ALL OF YOURSELF TO EXPRESS AND COMMUNICATE THE MESSAGE OF A SONG.

04. USE PROPER POSTURE—NOT ONLY TO SING BETTER BUT TO CREATE BETTER STAGE PRESENCE AS WELL. YOUR POSTURE WILL ALSO DEMONSTRATE YOUR CONFIDENCE (OR LACK THEREOF).

05. WORK ON YOUR STAGE PRESENCE AS A SINGER. YOU CAN PRACTICE LOOKING AND ACTING THE PART, BUT DO IT IN A WAY WHERE YOU CAN STILL BE TRUE TO YOURSELF. ONCE YOU BECOME COMFORTABLE WITH COMMUNICATING ON STAGE, THIS WILL GREATLY IMPROVE YOUR STAGE PRESENCE.

06. FINALLY, SEE GETTING YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS AS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN YOUR STAGE PERFORMANCE. IF YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN PRESENTING THE GOSPEL, KNOW THAT IT IS A LIFE AND DEATH DECISION FOR YOUR LISTENERS. ASK GOD FOR CREATIVE AND ORIGINAL IDEAS TO GET YOUR POINT ACROSS.

Communicative Skill

1. Choose the right song.

If you choose a song you can identify with, it will make it that much easier to communicate. It will be much easier for people to identify with the song as well. Choose a song you believe in.

2. Overcome shyness.

One of the hardest things to overcome as a musician or worship leader is stage fright. Sometimes the best way to conquer this fear is to just get out there and sing. Take advantage of any and every opportunity to perform in front of people.

3. Use volume and range to communicate lyrics.

Using dynamics—becoming louder in certain places and softer in others—will help capture your audience’s attention and point their hearts toward God.

4. Use body language.

Never stand as if you were bored with a song. Keep your energy high and on point. People will notice when you are sincere and passionate about what you are ministering. Become comfortable using your arms, hands, and facial expressions to communicate a song. If the song expresses longing or desire, use your arms and hands as if you are reaching out. If a song expresses joy, then laugh and smile.

5. Enunciate words.

Make sure to pronounce your words clearly so people can understand what you are saying. Practice saying tongue twisters!

6. Acknowledge your audience.

Make sure not to ignore your audience when you are ministering in song. Acknowledge and address them. You can introduce yourself and your song as well. Express why the song means so much to you.

7. Make eye contact.

Don’t be afraid to make eye contact with your audience. It can make them feel like a part of the song and engage them in the worship experience as a whole.

8. Tell a story.

When communicating a song, remember that you are telling a story through lyrics and vocal ability. Make sure that everything you're doing—volume, body language, arrangement, etc.—communicates your intended story.

9. Be yourself.

Don't try to be someone else. If you are comfortable with who you are, the audience will be comfortable with you and your presentation.

10. Think about the lyrics.

Consider what you are wanting to say through the song and what the song is saying. Do the two match? If you don't know a meaning of a word, look it up in the dictionary. Don't hesitate to ask leadership what things mean if you're unsure.

11. Use visuals.

Ask God for creative and original ideas to communicate your point. Remember, we live in a visual world. Churches use video screens during worship to display the song lyrics. Some artists show a music video while they are singing. Even groups who don't sing or dance as well as others might use visuals to convey their song's message. People in the audience may respond positively, not because of the group's musical ability but because of their creative ideas in communicating the message.

Expressiveness

1. Find the right song.

Finding the right song will allow you to show feelings and emotions through that song. Find a song that you love and are passionate about.

2. Feel the song.

You have many things to think about when singing a song, but arguably the most important one is communicating it to your audience. Decide which emotion the song depicts, as well as what you are wanting or hoping to elicit from the audience.

3. Think about the lyrics.

Consider what you are saying in your song and let your emotions reflect the true meaning of the words. Speak and learn the words of the song before putting it to music.

4. Feel the music.

Listen to different types of music—often strings, piano, and guitar can invoke strong emotion. See how others have accomplished communicating emotions with their songs and decide how you might do the same with yours.

5. Use facial expressions.

Don't be afraid to show emotions, such as sadness, joy, or laughter depending on what you hope to express through the song. Try keeping your eyes wide and raising your eyebrows a bit. This will also help with pitch.

6. Use body language.

Don't be shy in using your arms, hands, and even your feet to express a song. If you've got rhythm and it's appropriate, don't be afraid to dance or sway.

7. Use a confident stance.

Stand strong and confident. Hold your head high. Stand up straight but don't lock your knees. Remember, if God put you there, you have nothing to fear because He will help you.

8. Try acting.

Try acting out the song, just saying the words instead of singing. Observe how you would speak, act, and move. Then do the same things, but this time sing it.

9. Don't be afraid to be vulnerable.

It may be a difficult thing for you to sing and pour your emotions out to an audience. However, a lot of hard work went into preparing for this worship moment, so try to enjoy and connect with what's happening in the room. Ministry is a powerful thing that changes lives, so take advantage of this opportunity! Ask the Holy Spirit to lead your heart and attitude so you can then lead others to worship God.

Posture

Posture can help your singing or playing to a certain degree but doesn't have to be perfect. Strive for a relaxed, appropriate posture to maximize your vocal ability. Here are some tips to help you achieve good posture:

1. Your chin should be parallel to the floor.
Remembering and practicing this will keep you from lifting your head too high when singing higher or too low when singing in your lower register.
2. Shoulders should be back and down.
Hold your chest high, but don't hold it in an uncomfortable position. Remember to keep your shoulders relaxed.
3. Stomach should be flat and firm if possible.
Keep the stomach (your core) firm for muscle support as you sing. At the same time, make sure the abdomen is expanded and relaxed to create as much room for breathing as possible.
4. Hands and arms should be relaxed and down to the sides.
Practice keeping your arms and hands relaxed, and then when you use them to express emotion during the song the movements will look and feel more natural.
5. Don't lock your knees.
Be conscious about locking your knees—this puts stress on your joints and reduces blood flow. Keeping your knees relaxed will make it easier to move around onstage during the song.
6. Feet should be slightly apart, one a little in front of the other.
The weight of your body should be slightly forward to keep yourself balanced and make it easier to move.
7. Practice this posture exercise.
Stand up and place your heels, calves, buttocks, shoulders, and head up against and touching a wall. Feel this stance in your body so you know how good posture feels, and you can replicate it onstage.
8. Place one hand on the abdomen while breathing.
As you rehearse, placing a hand on your abdomen will help you recognize if your stomach is expanding and relaxed as you sing.
9. Shift the weight of your body.
Move forward until almost standing on tips of the toes. Try to establish a feeling of buoyancy for optimum movement and the best execution of your song.
10. Stand in a slouchy position, and then change to the correct posture and observe the difference between the two.
Getting used to seeing and feeling your body in the correct posture will help it come more naturally onstage.

Stage Presence

1. Capture the attention of your audience.

Be confident in who you are and who God made you to be. He has created you on purpose with a purpose. People will notice your boldness when you know and understand your identity in Christ, and they will be invested in your performance.

2. Connect with your audience.

Remember, one of the reasons you should be using your gifts is so you can reach your audience with the hope of the gospel. That is why it is so important to speak to your audience. Greet them and share a little about your song. Throughout the performance smile at and make eye contact with them. You can even make personal connections by mentioning peoples' names in the audience while performing, if appropriate. This is a sure-fire way to get the audience's attention.

3. Create audience participation.

The great thing about worship music is that it is perfect for audience participation. Try things like encouraging them to clap their hands or sing along. You can even do things like sing a line and have them sing it back.

4. Smile!

Be friendly with your audience. Show that you are enjoying yourself while you're onstage. Doing things like lifting your brows will brighten your face while also helping with pitch.

5. Tell your story.

Part of performing is communicating your story. And because it is your story, no one else knows it like you do and no one can share it like you. Take time to think through what you want to share with your audience. Be original and creative, but most of all be yourself.

6. Be bold.

Practice, rehearsal, training, schooling—all of these things will help combat stage fright and help you to be more confident during your performance.

7. Mingle with the crowd.

Not only are you there to perform and sing, but you should make yourself readily available to your audience before and/or after your performance. Sharing an encouraging word or simply saying hello will make a big difference with your audience.

8. Dress like an artist.

Prioritize dressing in a way that is neat, clean, and modest. Consider creative and unique clothing as well, depending on your style of music.

9. Learn to acknowledge others.

If you are playing with musicians make sure you acknowledge them in front of the audience. Ask the audience to give them a hand. Publicly thank the sound people if they did a good job, thank the people who are responsible for you being there, and also be sure to thank your audience after you perform.

Unity: Choir

If your performance involves multiple singers—whether an ensemble or a choir—vocal unity is crucial for the most expressive and effective performance.

1. Speak to your choir as unified ensemble.

When speaking to your choir, use language that makes them feel as if they are an important member of a larger group. Use words such as we, our, us, together, all, ensemble, and unity. Such communication can help create a more friendly and cooperative atmosphere. On the other hand, communicating phrases such as, “I want” could potentially create friction between you and your ensemble. For example, instead of saying, “I want to start at the top of the song,” try saying, “We all need to start from the top.” This can help raise morale and create unity.

2. Let singers know your vision and get them on board.

Explain to your singers the vision behind your particular music choice. Tell them why you chose it and what it means to you. Let them know what you hope the singers will get out of performing it, and explain any challenges that might arise from learning this piece of music. Do what it takes to get everyone on the same page.

3. Be encouraging.

There’s a saying, “You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar.” When your singers do well, praise them. If they do something that is incorrect or needs improvement first try to be encouraging, then offer gentle, constructive criticism.

4. Learn the rhythms.

Have singers speak the music rhythmically while their parts are played on the piano. This is especially helpful when the rhythm is challenging or the melodic/harmonic structure is not typical of the music you generally perform.

5. Count!

Use count-singing (one-and-two-and-three-and, one-and, etc.). Many singers don’t like to count, but many schooled and educated musicians use this technique. This helps singers attain better rhythmic precision and timing.

6. Use finger snaps.

If you are having trouble with cut-offs, have singers snap their fingers on the cut-offs.

7. Speak the rhythms.

Speak through the piece rhythmically only until perfect, on solfege (singing sol-fa syllables) until perfect, count-singing until perfect, and then finally with the sheet music.

8. Clap the rhythms.

If your ensemble is having trouble with a complicated rhythm, ask your singers to use a pencil to mark the beats on their sheet music, then have them clap the rhythm.



PRESENTATION/TECHNIQUE

INTRODUCTION

The importance of technique cannot be stressed enough. Technique will only enhance your style, consistency, dependability, and delivery to the point that God can move in a mighty way through the gifts He has given you. Having good vocal technique only adds to your musical future and ministry.

Good vocal technique will result in better performance, more endurance, more vocal range, a clear and better tone, more power in your voice, and more longevity in the years to come. It will lead you to work less as a singer than someone who does not have technique. It will prevent vocal damage such as nodes or polyps, which are calluses on the vocal cords that will cause you to lose your voice. It also can take years to recover from surgery to remove nodes or polyps, and people must relearn to sing. So, think of vocal technique as an investment in your gift, which will pay dividends in the future.

Technique ties into presentation—you can have a wonderful gift but not have good presentation, therefore won't be received well by the audience. Technique will help create proper presentation through a relaxed and controlled stage presence.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

The Presentation/Technique section deals with how you execute onstage. Everything that happens during a performance becomes a factor in how the audience receives you and the worship you lead.

01. GET A VOCAL TEACHER (ONE WHO TEACHES VOCAL TECHNIQUE) IN ORDER TO HELP YOU WORK ON AND IMPROVE YOUR SINGING. TECHNIQUES TO WORK ON ARE BREATHING, INTONATION, TONE QUALITY, VOCAL RANGE, ETC. YOUR VOCAL TEACHER SHOULD ALSO GIVE YOU WARM-UPS AND OTHER EXERCISES FOR YOUR BREATHING AND VOICE.

02. VOCALIZE EVERY DAY. HAVE AN ESTABLISHED GROUP OF WARM-UP AND VOCAL EXERCISES AND PRACTICE THEM EVERY DAY. USE A KEYBOARD OR PIANO TO GO THROUGH EACH SCALE. YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED AT HOW MUCH THIS WILL IMPROVE YOUR VOICE OVER TIME.

03. PRACTICE BY YOURSELF OR ASK A PIANO PLAYER PRACTICING HIS OR HER INSTRUMENT TO GO THROUGH THE SCALES.

04. A VOCAL COACH SHOULD HELP WITH STYLE AND REPERTOIRE. THEY CAN POTENTIALLY HELP YOU WITH ARTICULATION, DICTION, DYNAMICS, PHRASING, AND RHYTHMIC PRECISION AS WELL.

05. LEARN MUSIC THEORY. ALL VOCALISTS, EVEN IF THEY DON'T PLAY AN INSTRUMENT, SHOULD LEARN MUSIC. THE MOST INTERESTING AND FUN WAY TO LEARN MUSIC THEORY IS TO TAKE UP AN INSTRUMENT IF YOU DON'T PLAY ONE LIKE PIANO OR GUITAR. LEARNING AN INSTRUMENT WILL ALSO HELP YOU IN THE AREAS OF ARTICULATION, DYNAMICS, PHRASING, AND RHYTHMIC PRECISION.

06. PRACTICE YOUR VOICE AND INSTRUMENT TOGETHER EVERY DAY. THIS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO WORK ON YOUR TECHNIQUE AND MUSIC THEORY AT THE SAME TIME.

Articulation

Articulation, as it pertains to singing, is the ability to communicate a song in a technically correct and natural manner. Many things affect a singer's articulation, the primary culprits being tension and natural physical problems.

1. Relieve tension.

Tension affects every vocal performance. The vocal cords (which are muscles) along with the muscles of the jaw, lips, and inside of the mouth can tighten, producing poor tone quality and articulation.

2. Emphasize consonants.

One common problem with singers involves emphasizing—or not emphasizing—consonant sounds at the end of certain lines. A simple thing like making sure your consonants are heard will keep the message clear and help your audience understand what you're saying.

3. De-emphasize your Hs.

Another articulation problem may be substituting an H sound in words with certain vowel sounds. For example, the word “you” will sound like “you hoo,” or the word “me” may sound like “me hee,” or “fly” like “fli hi.” Learn to sustain these words over several notes and keep the true sound of the vowel instead of using the H sound.

4. Consider the style.

A good example of inappropriate articulation is a classical singer singing a country song in the style of a classical piece or vice versa. Remember that rules are different for every style. What works for one style may sound incorrect in another. For instance, pure clarity in articulating each word with strict pronunciation in a classical style would be considered inappropriate in a pop style. Still, your priority should be to make sure the words are understood by your audience, regardless of how relaxed the style of singing is.

5. Look for a vocal coach.

Seek a vocal coach who understands the difference between phonated and aspirated consonants. You should look for someone who also knows the difference between front vowels and back vowels, and how to use that knowledge to help you improve your singing. A great vocal coach will know effective ways to slightly change consonants and vowel formation to create good articulation.

6. Be confident.

Articulation is best achieved with confidence. This simply means you want to be heard and understood. Often vocalists mumble because they are not confident in a particular area—maybe lyrics, tone, or stage presence. Preparation increases confidence, and preparation then enhances articulation.

7. Listen to yourself.

If you want to be understood, then be clear in what you're singing. So much of that is achieved by listening to yourself. Try this by recording yourself singing alone. After judging the recording, be mindful of areas where you need to improve and try again. Be persistent, and through hard work you should be able to make needed improvements. You could also ask an unbiased party to listen to your recording and see if they understand the words you are singing.

8. Living on the vowel and skipping off the consonant.

Singers hold out vowels and connect them with consonants. You must learn to think of singing as “phrases” and not just notes and words. Proper phrasing makes singing sound more smooth and liquid. What also helps with a singer's vowels is teaching them about diphthongs. A diphthong is a sound formed by combining two vowels in a single syllable. The sound begins as one vowel sound and moves towards another. The two most common diphthongs in the English language are the letter combination “oy”/“oi,” as in “boy” or “coin,” and “ow”/“ou,” as in “cloud” or “cow.” You must learn to sing one of these sounds at a time clearly to create the exact vowel sound.

Breathing

Breathing properly while singing is one of the most important foundations of technique. Each and every tone we create is carried on the airflow of our breath. The more control you have over your breathing, the more control you will have over your singing.

1. Imagine your singing is like a kite flying high in the air.

When airflow is consistent, the kite will fly smoothly and steadily in the air. When airflow is inconsistent, the kite will deflate quickly and go wherever it pleases. Your singing tone is much like that kite. If you give it a steady and strong flow of air, your vocal tone will be stronger and smoother. However, if your airflow is uncontrolled, your voice will also be out of control.

2. Breathe properly.

To breathe properly while singing, you must breathe low into the bottom portion of the lungs, engaging the diaphragm. Your rib cage and back will expand. Your shoulders and upper chest should stay still and not rise.

3. Practice inhaling and exhaling.

Before ever saying a word or singing a note, practice your breathing. Inhale deeply and exhale completely. Again, inhale and exhale.

4. Use breathing exercises.

Inhale for four counts, hold your breath for four counts, exhale over four counts, and then wait four counts before inhaling again. (Inhale 2 3 4, hold 2 3 4, exhale 2 3 4, and wait 2 3 4.) Do three complete sets of this counting exercise. Remember to inhale deeply and properly for singing. Challenge yourself to increase the breathing count to 8, 12, 16 and more. For even better results, mix and match the numbers.

5. Use proper posture.

The sternum is the main part of your ribcage. Hold your ribcage moderately high (not stiff, but not slumped). This will allow you to take in the maximum amount of air while inhaling and will give you better breathing management while exhaling. To achieve this posture, raise your hands over your head and bring them down, while keeping the ribcage elevated in a relaxed manner. Notice how the rest of the body aligns itself (use a mirror to watch how this occurs). Your head, shoulders, hips, knees, and feet should be in a fairly straight line.

6. Master the deep, silent breath.

Now open your mouth and breathe in silently. Silence is the important thing here, because any noise will mean that the throat is tight and the breath shallow. You should notice the stomach or abdomen moving outward to allow for the diaphragm to come down. Be careful while doing this that your shoulders do not move. If you have problems feeling this, put your hands on your knees and breathe in. This expansive feeling will be very low and maybe even into the sides and the back. Then try to do the same exercise standing up. A deep, semi low breath is a full breath. A noisy, high breath is a shallow one.

7. Slow leak exercise.

Take a deep, silent breath and then make a very slow hissing sound (similar to a leaky tire). Put your hand on your stomach or abdomen and notice how slow it moves in. In fact, you will feel very little movement. Now do it again and place your hand on your sternum. Once again, you'll notice how little movement there is. If you take a deep, silent breath with the sternum moderately high, this will automatically happen as long as you don't let the ribcage collapse. By keeping the sternum up and the abdominal wall out (not rigid and locked into place), the diaphragm will ascend slowly and stay under your control. Make sure not to overwhelm the vocal folds with too much air.

TIP

INCORRECT BREATHING CAN ALSO BE ATTRIBUTED TO NERVES BEFORE SINGING. LEARN TO RELAX AND WORK AT FEELING CONFIDENT IN YOUR SINGING AND YOU WILL BE ABLE TO BREATHE FREELY AND CALMLY. TRY THIS EXERCISE: BREATHE IN AND COUNT TO FIVE, INHALE AGAIN, HOLD, THEN EXHALE. THIS WILL FORCE YOU TO FOCUS ON YOUR BREATHING AND SLOW IT DOWN. IT WILL ALSO BRING DOWN YOUR HEART RATE BECAUSE OF YOUR INTAKE OF OXYGEN.

Blend: Ensemble/Choir

1. Choose the right music.

Choosing the best and most appropriate music for your choir/ensemble is of utmost importance. Choosing the right music will help in matters of discipline, motivation, expression, and even intonation.

2. Maintain good vocal technique.

In order to blend with other singers, learn to take direction from your director, especially in matters of dynamics, diction, and phrasing. Everyone in the ensemble must sing with the same volume, pronounce words the same way, and begin and end together. However, good vocal technique should never have to be compromised while singing in a group. A singer should never have to brighten or darken their tone. Singers should always maintain a clear tone with normal speech-like singing. Your vocal technique should never change while singing in a group—only the vocal expression should vary as you blend. In a good ensemble or choir, no one person should stick out. A singer shouldn't want to stick out though, since then it would no longer be considered an ensemble.

3. Learn how to blend.

Putting good lead singers together to sing as a group doesn't mean they will sound best as a group. Voices might stick out in different parts of the music because a lot of lead singers are not used to blending their voices with other vocalists. In order to blend, you need to sing with a balanced tone that is not too harsh or strident, and with neutral (not wide) vowel sounds. There are certain subtle vowel sounds you can all use on certain words to blend better together. Another blend issue is the amount of vibrato you use. Since some styles of music require a straighter tone while others require more vibrato, a great idea is to match vibratos with the other singers in the group. A good exercise is to take a major triad, have each person sing one part of the chord, then practice holding out a word for four counts while you match vowel sounds, tone, and vibrato.

4. Practice blending with recordings.

Good harmony singers need to learn to sing the different nuances of one style as one voice. So, practice singing along with vocalists or vocal groups that you like. You can also record yourself singing along. Play it back and listen to see if you are phrasing with them and if your vibrato matches with theirs. Are you pronouncing your words the same as them? How about the phrasing and dynamics? Keep working to develop these skills, and you will improve as a group singer.

5. Sing in tune.

Harmony singers need to be able to sing in tune together, creating chords. You can take some basic ear training at a local college or music school, learning to sing arpeggios of various chords and their inversions. Again, singing along with any kind of harmony vocals will help. Try to find recordings from the 1940s through 1980s that have a lot of vocal harmonies. See if you can hear the different harmonies and try to sing each part. Practicing recognizing all the parts will help you understand your tone and pitch. Also, good vocal technique can greatly improve your pitch. You might have a difficult time singing your part with accuracy and in tune with others if you are tense or too breathy. One singer singing off-pitch can adversely affect the whole group.

6. Pay attention to the groove.

Good singing is not just about melody; rhythm is just as important. Different songs have different rhythms or “grooves.” Again, attending a music class may help you with the foundation. You can also get together with someone who plays a percussive instrument such as drums, congas, or bongo and have them record various beats. When you sing any style, you want to learn the basic rhythms of a groove and its subdivisions, such as eighth or sixteenth notes. That way, what you sing goes with the rhythm or groove of the song. All singers in a group have to lock into the groove together. A cappella groups create their own rhythm vocally. Again, listening is key.

7. Choose the right voice for the right part.

Sopranos should be able to sing G below middle C and F above high C. Altos should be able to sing C below middle C and C above high C. Tenors should be able to sing C below middle C and E above high C. Baritones should be able to sing G below middle C and B above middle C. Basses should be able to sing E below low C and G above middle C. All voices should be able to maintain a connected tone throughout these registers. However, the most reputable voice teachers say the basic quality of the voice is the most important factor to consider. Assuming a person’s speaking voice is clear and unforced, the singing part should be based on the quality of the speaking voice. So, make sure sopranos sing the soprano part, altos sing the alto part, tenors sing the tenor part, etc.

Breathing

“The term articulation refers to the actions of the glottis, lips, tongue, teeth, hard palate, velum (soft palate), and jaws that combine to form word sounds. Diction is the precise formation and arrangement of these sounds into language patterns that accurately convey both the literary and the musical meaning of a song. If a song is sung with poor diction (faulty articulation of vowels and consonants), much more than the literary meaning is lost; the quality of the singing voice is also impaired, resulting in a musical loss.”

— Fundamentals of Singing by Charles E. Lindsley

1. Listen to singers with good diction.

Diction is basically word choice. One great way to learn is to listen to singers with good diction. Many classical singers have good diction.

2. Practice speaking clearly!

One way to practice good diction while singing is to practice speaking clearly and slowly.

3. Practice speaking correctly.

- ⚙ “Got to” should be “have to.”
- ⚙ “Woulda/coulda/shoulda” should be “would have”/“could have”/“should have.”
- ⚙ “Uzshly” should be “usually.”
- ⚙ “Gonna” should be “going to.”
- ⚙ “Wanna” should be “want to.”
- ⚙ “Cancha” should be “can’t you.”

4. Study the language.

If you are singing in a foreign language, study that language and look to join a conversation group. Visit the country that speaks that language if possible, and if not, listen to movies or recordings of people speaking that language.

5. Work on your accent.

Some Southerners and Northeasterners of the United States, for example, must be careful of their accents when singing and speaking. Listen to people like news reporters to learn to speak more generically.

6. Articulate!

Practice articulating all vowels (A, E, I, O, U), then all consonants (all the other letters) correctly.

7. Practice tongue twisters.

Try saying, “A big black bug bit the big black bear, made the big black bear bleed blood.”
Or “Sudden swallows swiftly skimming sunset’s slowing spreading shade, silvery songsters sweetly singing summer’s soothing serenade.”

8. Modify vowels on high pitches.

Instead of singing pure vowels, you will sing modified vowels on the higher pitches.

9. Ask others to be honest with you.

After you sing or record a song, you can ask an unbiased party if they understand the words you are singing.

TIP

TRY THIS EXERCISE THAT RADIO ANNOUNCERS DO TO ENUNCIATE AND SPEAK CLEARLY: FIND A LIST OF TONGUE TWISTERS ON THE INTERNET. TAKE A CLEAN GAUGE OR TIP OF A TOWEL BETWEEN YOUR FINGERS AND HOLD THE TIP OF YOUR TONGUE OUT. NOW SAY SOME TONGUE TWISTERS SLOWLY WITHOUT PULLING YOUR TONGUE BACK IN YOUR MOUTH. AS YOUR TONGUE, NECK MUSCLES, AND SHOULDERS RELAX, WORK UP TO SAYING THEM FASTER AND FASTER. YOU WILL BE SURPRISED HOW CLEAR YOU BEGIN TO TALK AND SING AS YOU PRACTICE THIS.

Dynamics

Few songs are performed at the same dynamic level throughout. The ebbs and flows of volume in songs convey certain moods and emotions to the audience. Effective dynamics can also provide smoother musical transitions from song to song. Dynamics executed well can help drive home the feeling you want to convey and engage the audience in the song and its message; however, it must be done correctly by the vocalist(s) to achieve the best results and protect the voice.

1. Consider dynamics when developing your voice.

You need to consider a few things about dynamics to protect your voice as you develop your singing gift. First, do not push your voice to get louder. When practicing, you should try to keep your voice at the same level. In the next few points you'll find some exercises you can apply while developing good dynamic health.

2. Stand straight—do not slouch over.

This is very important, but often neglected. You simply will not have adequate breath support if your lungs collapse in because you are slouched over.

3. Start with breathing exercises.

Breathe in and hiss air out. Hum on different pitches. Go up and down a few of the easy major scales on a staccato “ha” sound to get your diaphragm ready to go.

4. Pick a note or a range of notes that is easy for you to sing.

Middle C is a good option for altos; the G above for sopranos; the G below for tenors; and the C an octave below for basses.

5. Sing that note...

.. at a mezzo piano (mp) level on a syllable such as “ah” and hold it for as long as you can at that volume. Mezzo piano means moderately soft.

6. Repeat steps 4–5...

..but this time start at mezzo piano (mp) and go through piano (p—soft) all the way down to pianissimo (pp—very soft), which should be the quietest and softest you can possibly sing without straining.

7. Again.

Begin this time at mezzo forte (mf), or moderately loud, using the same note and syllable you did above. Increase the volume of this tone to forte (f—loud), all the way up to fortissimo (ff—very loud). This should be the loudest you can sing with good breath support and without straining.

8. Repeat the exercise.

Begin this time at pianissimo (pp), using the same note and syllable you did previously. Work your way all the way up to fortissimo (ff), remembering to keep your pitch and syllable constant, changing only the volume you are singing at.

9. Reverse what you did in step 8.

Begin at fortissimo (ff) and work your way down to pianissimo (pp). Again, the pitch and syllable should not change—only the volume should change.

Intonation

Intonation or pitch—some even call it ear development—is the most important aspect of being a great vocalist. Intonation is a manner of producing correct tones, especially regarding accuracy of pitch, matching the true note. If you can't hear the note, you can't sing it. So how can a singer develop great intonation?

1. You can develop intonation with a lot of practice.

Ear training or pitch exercises are terms used to describe the method of teaching and learning how to identify a note and sing in tune with the note or chord that is played. If you can hear different pitches, then you can develop this skill. The next few points will offer ways to develop your ability to hear pitch or intonation.

2. First, get in a comfortable position to sing.

If at a piano, sit upright and close your eyes. Take a pencil and a note anywhere on the piano and then try to guess the note you struck. Continue doing this throughout the range of the piano to increase your ears. You can also use a guitar.

3. Practice singing scales up and down throughout your vocal register.

As you work on increasing your ability to hear pitches up and down the registers of the piano or guitar, start playing two or three notes or a complete chord, then try to determine the notes and match the pitch.

4. Continue to practice songs.

Practice listening for the notes and matching the pitch on songs you're familiar with. Then challenge yourself to do the same with songs you don't know.

5. Get your friends involved.

Ask your friends to help you develop your hearing skills by playing notes on a piano, keyboard, or guitar while you guess the pitches.

Rhythmic Precision

The following suggestions are primarily for use when working with an ensemble or choir, when you are seeking to create unity in rhythm among all the singers.

1. Listen to rhythmic styles of music.

Latin is a very rhythmic style of music, as is jazz, gospel, and R&B. Spend time listening to different styles of music and learn the different rhythms of each style.

2. Practice speaking rhythmically.

Have singers speak the music rhythmically while their parts are played on the piano. This can be especially helpful when the rhythm is challenging and/or the melodic/harmonic structure is not typical of the music you or others usually perform.

3. Count!

Use count-singing. Some singers don't like to count, but many schooled and educated musicians use this technique. This helps singers attain better rhythmic precision and timing.

4. Finger snap.

If you are having trouble with cut-offs, practice snapping your fingers on the cut-offs.

5. Clap the rhythm.

If you are having trouble with a complicated rhythm, mark the beats in your music, then clap the rhythm.

6. Speak through the piece rhythmically.

Speak through the piece rhythmically only until perfect, then on solfege (singing "sol-fa") until perfect, then count-singing until perfect, and finally with the sheet music.

7. Use a metronome.

A metronome marks and adjusts basic speed to control tempo. Build a foundation by learning and practicing the rhythm and timing, but at the end of each practice turn the metronome off to make sure you work on internalizing your own sense of rhythm and timing.

Vocal Tone

Vocalists in your worship team or band carry the lyrics, which carries the message to the heart of your audience. Proper vocal tone will ensure that message is conveyed effectively.

1. Use the right voice for the song.

Most bands today need to be diversified and having more than one lead vocal is beneficial. Be sure to use the person in your group who will give a particular song the best chance for success. Style, comfort, and tone will dictate who you should choose.

2. Blend with everyone.

Multiple vocals during a song sound best when each person is working to blend with the others rather than trying to stand out alone. Let the lead vocalist worry about standing out with the main lyrics while the rest of the vocalists practice sounding like one voice.

3. Determine when to use vibrato versus straight tone.

Vocals should stay unified when it comes to the use of vibrato or singing straight. One person singing vibrato while another doesn't does not sound pleasing. Work on listening to each other and strategize in rehearsal what you are going to do regarding vibrato.

4. Develop proper vocal resonance.

Many lead vocalists use different techniques to project their tone. Good tone comes from good technique. To develop your voice as an artist, especially learning how to develop resonance in your voice, seek the help of a vocal coach. If you are struggling to find yourself and your tone, take lessons to help you master your voice. The texture of your voice will really improve!

5. Choose songs people will believe in when you perform them.

Attempting to perform a song by an artist with a voice that doesn't accomplish a particular style well may be a difficult sell. Some songs are so defined by a particular artist that it may be wise to avoid them. Plenty of material is available out there, so select songs that you and your group can perform well. Certain people do certain kinds of songs better than others. That is fine, but you should learn to recognize what works and what doesn't.

6. Listen to quality vocalists.

Listening to great singers creates a solid library from which your own style can develop. This will allow you and your team to continue growing in your tone quality. Phrasing will become noticeably better when you listen to quality vocalists and their music.

7. Breathe correctly.

Proper breathing technique is absolutely essential for quality tone! Lessons, if possible, will ensure that you improve on this.

Tone Quality

A common pursuit among singers is the quest for good head and chest voice/tone resonance. This will result in the tone you're looking for.

1. Understand the importance of learning good blend of tone.

Blending these two voice qualities or vocal colors (head and chest) can be a major source of confusion and frustration for many aspiring singers. However, once you understand how the voice works, blending the vocal colors should feel as easy and automatic as speaking expressively.

2. Blending brings greater emotion.

Once you are able to successfully blend tones, you will sing with more emotion and passion because you will know how to create the tones that draw out the feelings of the songs you are singing. Some people call this singing with feeling.

3. Learn the bright quality of head resonance.

When properly supported, head tone or resonance has a brilliant ringing quality compared to chest resonance in singers. This bright voice tone is developed in the bones and cavities above, behind, and around the nose—known as the mask.

4. Learn to recognize unsupported head resonance.

The sound projected from unsupported head resonance is quite different from the bright tone and is characterized by a false falsetto tone. This oddity occurs when a singer suddenly switches into a choirboy tone.

5. The resonators create unique sound.

Your resonators have a lot to do with what your voice sounds like. This is why many singers with high voices each has a different blend of sound and tonal quality.

6. Now try this experiment to feel the resonating system of the head.

Gently tap your finger on the bone between the upper lip and the nose. Can you hear the gentle thud it made? Now tap the bridge of your nose and then your forehead just below your hairline as you listen to the thuds. Did you notice that the taps are higher in pitch as you ascend from the lip to the forehead? This experiment helps you understand that certain bones are predisposed to amplify various pitch levels.

7. Learn the true meaning of chest resonance.

When singers refer to chest resonance, they are actually talking about a vocal tone characterized by darker vowel qualities or mellowness. However, the term is a misnomer. By dictionary definition, an effective resonating chamber is a hollow place surrounded by hard surfaces. The chest is too full of organs to be suitable for amplifying the singing tone.

8. Throat/chest resonance needs empty space.

To achieve effective throat or chest resonance, you need amplification of the lower vibrations created by the vocal cords in the mouth and throat. Contrary to popular thinking, most so-called chest resonance comes from the throat and not the chest. However, there is distinct sensation of vibration in the chest when singing in this tone, especially in the sternum or breastbone area. This feeling gathered in the chest area can also be used effectively to stabilize high notes. So, in order to achieve good singing tone, you must practice with the right vocal exercises to blend the head and chest tones.

How to Overcome Stage Fright

Stage fright can be debilitating for many singers; however, if you have been gifted with a voice to sing and express God's message to others, it's important that you learn to overcome this challenge. With the following practices, you can approach an audience with confidence!

1. Pray or meditate.

Meditate on Scriptures, pray, and ask God for guidance. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7, NKJV).

2. See the audience as one person.

Speak to the audience as if you were speaking to one single person. This will help you focus on being personal with each person there. You can even imagine them as your biggest supporter—whether that is a friend, family member, or someone else.

3. Use humor!

Don't be afraid to be funny. If you have a great sense of humor, use it. Learn a good joke or two. This can help you relax and help your audience feel more comfortable too.

4. Be prepared!

Let your fear drive you to prepare for the performance. Let your nerves push you to rehearse and practice well. This will increase your confidence, which in turn decreases fear. However, remember to strive for excellence, not perfection!

5. Overcome fear of man.

One of the main reasons we have stage fright is because we care about what others think of us, and we fear people will think we are less than wonderful. You must have a healthy self-esteem before you ever set foot onstage. Start making positive confessions about yourself every day. You can start by repeating Psalm 139:14; know you are wonderful without any applause or accolades because God created you as His masterpiece. Do not become addicted to man's applause. What will happen when you don't have it? Remember, fear of man is a snare but trusting in the Lord means safety (Proverbs 29:25).

6. Make your performance a celebration, not a trial!

Work on transforming your nervousness into excitement and enthusiasm. Remember, the most important thing during your performance is to be happy, smile, and have fun as you share God's message with others.

7. Use relaxation and breathing techniques.

You can ease tension by doing different exercises. Sit comfortably with your back straight. Breathe in slowly, hold your breath for four to five seconds, then slowly exhale. To relax your facial muscles, open your mouth and eyes wide, then close them tightly.

8. Visualize success!

Studies show that visualizing something going well helps make it happen. Many athletes use visualization before a competition, while many beauty pageant winners visualize the crown on their heads before winning.



EFFECTIVENESS

INTRODUCTION

Someone once said you know you are called when people call. In other words, you know you are meant to do something when other people ask you to do it. While this may be true to a certain extent, greatness can come out of every person. Some just have to dig a little deeper than others.

Ultimately, every Christian is called to ministry. The question is, to what capacity and to which ministry? Finding your ministry is the key to effectiveness. Your most successful ministry is what you are most passionate about and able to express with utmost sincerity. If you believe what you're called to with your whole heart, other people will believe it too. If you are excited about it, then others will be as well.

An effective vocal performance takes a great deal of preparation, so it is important you have a singing gift. If you do, then it is only a matter of honing your gift and making it better. Some people might ask, "If God has given me a gift, why should I have to work at it?" It's because God wants you to. The Bible says, "Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval" (2 Timothy 2:15, NLT). The kingdom of God calls us to excellence. Besides, why would you want to give any less than your best? Why wouldn't you want to be the best you can be? A little work goes a long way.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Effectiveness is simply re-examining everything you desire to communicate through the worship service or event. Each event has a different set of goals and vision in mind, so you will want to look at every detail.

01. BELIEVE WHAT YOU ARE SINGING. IF YOU SHARE YOUR TESTIMONY, BE SINCERE AND SHARE IT FROM YOUR HEART. SHOW YOUR PASSION AND EXCITEMENT IN SHARING THE GOSPEL BECAUSE IF YOU ARE EXCITED, YOUR LISTENERS WILL BE AS WELL.

02. LEARN THE WORD OF GOD. THE MOST IMPORTANT WAY TO BECOME AN EFFECTIVE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IS TO READ IT! IF POSSIBLE, ENROLL IN BIBLE CLASSES. MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE. CULTIVATE A PERSONAL PRAYER LIFE. ESTABLISH A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD!

03. USE DIFFERENT MEMORIZATION TECHNIQUES TO LEARN THE MELODY AND LYRICS TO YOUR SONGS. EVERYONE LEARNS DIFFERENTLY, SO TRY DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES AND FIND WHAT WORKS BEST FOR YOU.

04. TAKE TIME IN PREPARING AND REHEARSING YOUR SONG. PRACTICE EVERY DAY AND PERFORM IT EVERY CHANCE YOU GET UNTIL YOU MAKE IT A PART OF YOU.

05. PRACTICE DAILY UP UNTIL THE DAY OF YOUR PERFORMANCE. THEN, IF POSSIBLE, REST AND RELAX ON THE DAY OF YOUR PERFORMANCE. PERFORM YOUR WARM-UPS ONLY BEFORE SINGING.

06. TREAT YOUR BODY RIGHT. IN ORDER TO SING AND MINISTER WITH EXCELLENCE, LEARN TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. EATING WELL, EXERCISING, AND GETTING PROPER REST WILL HELP YOU LOOK BETTER, FEEL BETTER, AND PERFORM BETTER.

07. LEARN HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR AUDIENCE. FIND WAYS FOR THEM TO ENGAGE OR EVEN PARTICIPATE WHILE YOU ARE PERFORMING. TREAT THEM AS YOU WOULD YOUR BEST FRIEND OR BIGGEST SUPPORTER.

Evident Ministry

1. Have a ministry.

Ministry is simply serving and meeting the needs of others. Who are you passionate about helping? What are your special gifts in ministry (besides music)? Discovering these abilities and passions, then using them to serve others will teach you how to serve others through your music as well.

2. Prepare your testimony.

Share what you have been through and how God has helped you. Tell others how you got saved. Even if there are those who don't agree with the gospel, they cannot dispute your experience.

3. Get involved in a local church.

Get plugged in at your local church and within your community. This can open up opportunities to find what your gifts are and who you are passionate about helping.

4. Learn the Word of God!

Spend time reading and meditating on God's Word. If offered, enroll in classes at your church to help you learn more about what the Bible says. If you do this, make sure you do it through a church that teaches the Word of God scripturally and soundly.

5. Memorize Scripture.

One of the best ways to minister to people is by first internalizing the truths of God's Word yourself. When you memorize Scripture, you will be able to recall it whenever you need it for yourself or when you have the opportunity to share it with someone else.

6. Invest in your prayer life.

Praying is simply having a conversation with God. It's important that you spend time with Him every day. If you don't know what to say, you can take your Scripture memorization and use that to pray. The best way to pray the will of God for your life is to use the Word of God. You can also find prayer partners and pray in the Holy Spirit.

7. Surround yourself with ministry-minded people.

You become who you surround yourself with. Be intentional with who you spend your time with—make sure they have integrity, good character, and can encourage or mentor you in the ministry.

Memorization

When you have your music and lyrics memorized, you can communicate more effectively with your audience. Then the message of your song can reach into the hearts of the listeners without distraction. Here are some recommendations for learning how to memorize your song(s).

1. Practice! Practice! Practice!

Everyone loves the accolades and applause, but if you want to excel you have to work hard and be dedicated.

2. Read and repeat words in short phrases.

Try reading the lyrics with no music. Really focus on the words and what the song is saying. Take time to repeat this process until you know the lyrics.

3. Speak the rhythm of the song.

Now that you know the words, try speaking the song in rhythm. Don't sing just yet; practice getting the flow of the music down.

4. Record yourself.

Record yourself rehearsing the song so you can listen back to it. Listen to it every day to help ensure that you know the lyrics and rhythm without question.

5. Repeat the song every day.

Take time to both speak and sing the words out loud each day to keep them at the forefront of your mind.

6. Rehearse the song in your head.

If you are not able to rehearse out loud, try rehearsing in your head. This can be especially effective to do right before you go to bed.

7. Create imagery.

As you speak and sing the words, try creating imagery in your head—you can imagine things that literally relate to what you are saying or picture use figurative mental images, but choose things that will help you remember the words. Associate each word, phrase, or verse with an image.

Preparation

Learning how to prepare to sing your song before an audience combines a number of things we've already covered. Put them together with a few more tips to get ready for your performance.

1. Practice ... again!

Rehearse your song every day until it becomes second nature to you. Perform in front of your friends and family. Ask them to give you constructive criticism, then work on implementing it.

2. Memorize lyrics.

It's important that you know the words to the song(s) you are performing. Practice different memorization techniques and find what works best for you, then utilize it regularly.

3. Work on your technique.

Continue to do your warm-ups and lip trills each day, and definitely take time to do these warm-ups before your performance. However, don't think about it once you are performing! Focus on singing and conveying your heart, emotion, and message to the audience. The more prepared you are, the easier that will be.

4. Plan your outfit.

Think about what you want to wear. Consider your overall appearance—neat, clean, and modest should guide your style. Make sure your clothes are clean and pressed, and make sure to think through how your clothing and accessory choices might affect the delivery of your song.

5. Be courteous.

It's common for nerves to cause performers to act unfriendly or standoffish. Even if you feel nervous, do your best to be polite and kind to everyone you meet as you rehearse or perform. Say hello, have conversations, and be interested in what they have to say. You never know when you might be working with them again!

6. Be on time!

Make sure to be at your venue on time or early. This is just common courtesy—you don't want to keep anyone waiting if you can help it. If you tend to have a real problem with lateness, set your clock ahead.

7. Relax!

Practice relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises. Auditions and performances can be nerve-racking and stressful, which can sometimes cause you to forget things. You will perform better if you are relaxed!

8. Take care of your body.

Eating right, exercising, and getting plenty of rest will enhance your performance. It will also help you look, feel, and sing better. Drink room temperature water as opposed to ice cold water before singing.

9. Rest your voice.

Try not to talk excessively before a performance (or at all). Also, if possible try to not sing on the day of your performance before you go onstage. Only do your warm-ups before the performance.

Understandable Concept & Interpretation

This is the combination of music selection, communication, presentation and technique, and effectiveness in attaining a response.

1. Select appropriate songs.

It is important to understand which music selections will and won't work, and why. The venue will help dictate that, but it is wise to think through beforehand.

2. Pray about communicating the songs.

There is no perfect formula that will guarantee every person will love every section you have planned. However, prayer will absolutely make your ministry more effective. Continue praying!

3. Plan out your songs.

The goal here is to bring your performance to a powerful and effective close. Planning for each venue to meet goals set by leadership will largely depend on the songs you have selected and when you use them in the worship service or event.

4. Dynamics can affect the audience immensely.

A great worship song can really impact people by simply taking the loudness of the song down to a "voices only" sound level. Hearing people sing a song together with passion really can put things in perspective. At this point, hopefully everyone is locked in and is open to experiencing a defining moment in their lives. Presenting a song using this technique is a powerful way to get the message of the song across.

5. Use your skills wisely.

Singing things that only attract the ears of musicians could cause you to lose your audience if most of them are not musicians. Sing tastefully without overdoing it so everyone can enjoy and appreciate the skills God has given you. Stay true to who God has created you to be, and your audience will be touched by your presentation of the gospel in song.

6. Do not duplicate everything like the original!

Listen to various versions of the song for inspiration. Use them to find your own style and sound when communicating this song.

7. Play through any mistakes.

When a mistake is made during a song, continue through to the next common point of reference to get back on point. Occasionally mistakes happen. Proper preparation will help you quickly and smoothly transition through it, and it will go mostly undetected by your audience.

Final Comments

Proverbs 22:29 says “Do you see any truly competent workers? They will serve kings rather than working for ordinary people” (NLT).

We encourage you to continue to seek after excellence—not just in the arts, but in every area of your life. The Bible says, “And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father” (Colossians 3:17, NLT). We believe studying to be a musician or singer is just as important and necessary as studying to be a doctor or going to seminary to be a minister. The reason is because the responsibility to be a worthy representative of the Lord is there. The sphere of influence is the same and sometimes greater. As an artist you have a voice and a platform, so it is your responsibility to use that gift to the best of your ability.

Come to the Lord and thank Him for the gift He has given you. Ask Him to give you the wisdom to be a good steward of this gift. Ask Him to help you make it the best it can be so you can reach people for Him. Let your gift be used for His glory.