A Little Guide to Practicing Singing

Thinking about working on your singing? Awesome!

Maybe you're taking voice lessons, or you've found interesting exercises and tips online to help you improve. There's no shortage of information out there about how to become a better singer. But this little guide isn't about **what** to practice—it's about **how** to practice in a way that's rewarding, effective, and, most importantly, enjoyable.

Before we begin, I want to say this: practicing singing isn't just about learning to sing better. It's also about getting to know your own voice. Only you can truly feel what's going on in your body and with your sound. No one else can use your voice for you, and knowing what to do is only part of the puzzle: the sustainable growth comes from trying things out yourself and paying close attention to how they feel.

That's why it's so valuable to **spend time with your voice:** listening, experimenting, and learning to notice how different changes feel in your body and voice. Focused practice sessions are a great opportunity for this kind of exploration!

Happy singing!
–Heta

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The Cornerstones of Effective Practice

Quality over quantity

Focused repetitions matter more than how long you practice. Ten minutes of concentrated work a few times a week is far more valuable than an hour of casually singing through songs once a week.

Note: Just singing for fun is also important and wonderful! But when it's practice time, really practice. 🙂

Stay focused—one thing at a time

You might notice lots of things in your singing you'd like to improve. That's great! But **choose just one thing** to focus on at a time. You'll get better results, enjoy your practice more, and see progress faster. And.. With the voice, everything is connected, so even if you focus on just one thing, you can trust that you're developing your whole instrument!

Break it down

Simplify, reduce, shorten! If a song's rhythm feels tricky, try speaking the lyrics in rhythm before adding melody. Struggling with a high chorus? Try singing it first on an easier syllable/vowel before moving to the actual words.

Practice ≠ performance

You're not performing–you're practicing. You don't need to sound polished. Give yourself full permission to experiment, try new things, and sound a little weird in the process. That's where **learning** happens!

Structuring Your Practice

There are many ways to practice singing. Here's one example of how you might structure a vocal practice session. You can use this as a starting point to build your own routine:

This template for a practice session has three parts:

1 Warming up the body
2 Saying hello to your voice
3 Focus point
4 Applying what you've practiced to a song

Let's get started!

1

Warming up the body

Your body **is** your instrument. Don't skip the chance to ground yourself in your body, maybe stretch a little, move around (maybe to some music!), and take a few deeper breaths. The connection between body and mind is essential for vocal practice. One of the core goals of training is learning to notice how different exercises feel in both your body and your voice. When your body feels relaxed but energized, singing becomes much more effortless.

Here are a few simple warm-ups to get you started:

- Gentle stretching
- Shaking out tension from arms, hands, legs
- Rolling your tongue around the inside of your mouth and along your teeth (this helps stretch, strengthen, and relax the tongue)
- …and anything else that helps you feel present and ready!

2

Hello voice!

Time to gently wake up your voice and check in—how's it feeling today?

This part is all about exploring your sound with kindness and curiosity. A great way to do this is with semi-occluded vocal tract exercises (or SOVTs, for short). These exercises partially close off the vocal tract while you're making sound, which slows down the airflow and creates gentle back pressure. That back pressure helps your vocal folds vibrate more easily and reduces strain.

SOVTs are a well-researched, effective way to improve vocal control, tone quality, and stamina. Even if you're short on time, doing a few of these can make a big difference!

Some great examples include:

- Lip trills (buzzing your lips like a motorboat)
- Tongue trills ("rrrr" rolled with the tongue)
- Raspberry (tongue out, loose and buzzing like a kid making a silly sound)
- "Mmm" sound
- The "ng" sound (like in the word "sing")
- Buzzing "vvv" or "zzz" sounds

You don't need a piano or any instrument, just make gentle gliding sounds using whichever one feels best for you.

3

Focus point

This is the heart of your practice session, where you zoom in on one specific aspect of your singing. It might be something like relaxed breath in, isolating tongue and jaw movements, strengthening your chest or head voice, or tightening up rhythm in a song.

Ask yourself: What's one thing I want to improve today? And more importantly, which exercises will move me closer to that goal?

Let's say today's focus is strengthening your chest voice. Your practice might look like this:

- Find the register through speech. Try saying something like "oh really?", or "no no" with a clear, firm start. That grounded, spoken tone is your chest voice.
- Alternate between speech and song. Say "no no" and then sing it on a single pitch, staying close to your speaking voice. Try to keep the same physical feeling in both.
- Build from there. Once that feels easy, add more notes. For instance: sing a short pattern like 1-2-1 (e.g., C–D–C).

How do you know if it's working?

- You feel like you're getting closer to your goal (e.g., your voice sounds stronger, easier, ...)
- Singing feels easier, freer, more resonant, with less effort or tension
- You notice reduced physical strain or tightness
  You can clearly feel or hear a difference compared to how it felt before

    - Pro tip: If you're not sure whether there's a difference, deliberately do an "exaggeratedly bad" version first. The contrast can help you recognize what actually works.

Take your time. While progress sometimes comes in sudden breakthroughs, it's usually built slowly through steady, mindful repetition. And don't worry, you'll have plenty of chances to return to all those other exciting areas of practice. One step at a time is enough!

4

Apply It to a Song

Now it's time to bring what you've been practicing into a song.
You don't need to sing the whole piece from start to finish: just choose a phrase, a verse, or a chorus where today's focus really comes into play.

Let's say you've been working on chest voice. You could try applying it to a verse from Let It Be like this:

- First, sing the melody using a speech-like syllable, such as "no no" keeping that grounded, spoken feeling in your voice.
- Then sing the verse with the actual lyrics, trying to maintain the same speech-like tone and vocal ease.
- You can also speak the lyrics first, then immediately sing them with the melody, keeping that natural, spoken connection alive as you transition into singing.

As singers, we're always learning songs, but what you're really doing through focused practice is **building skills you can apply to any song.** That's the real magic. Each time you practice mindfully, you're expanding your vocal toolkit and growing your ability to sing a wider variety of songs, just the way you want to sing them.

In summary:

1	Warming up	• Shoulder and arm rolls
		• Gentle torso twists
		• Shaking out the body
		• Stretching
		• Light self-massage:
		  ◦ Jaw and temples
		  ◦ Muscles under the tongue (starting from the jawline)
		• Tongue circles and stretches

2	Hello voice!	• With slides:
		  ◦ SOVTs:
		  ▪ lip trill, tongue trill, raspberry
		  ▪ mm, ng, zz, vv

3	Focus pouint	Examples of Focus Areas: • Relaxed breath in • Brightening your high notes • Jaw relaxation • Pitch accuracy within a melody • Larynx height • Separating tongue and jaw movement • Adding twang (a focused, bright vocal quality) • Stability and clarity in low notes • ... ◦
4	Applicati -on	• Sing a part of the song with a simple approach • Focus on a small section at a time. • Use the same focus point as in the exercises from section 3.

You can pick ideas for each step from the the previous page, and bild your own practice session!

Your own practice session:

1	Warming up the body
2	Hello, voice!
3	Focus point
4	Application into a song

And after all this, remember: “Just singing” is enough, too. You don’t always have to be improving, analyzing, or fixing things!

There’s a time for vocal training and a time for just singing. The goal of practice is to learn and strengthen vocal techniques that are purposeful for you so that they become easier and more effortless to use in your everyday singing!

Enjoy your practice!

- Heta

Heta Nykänen, singing lessons

Lääkärinkatu 4, 00250, Helsinki
Iso-Roobertinkatu 17-19, Helsinki
heta.nykanen@gmail.com
www.hetanykanen.com