

THE UPSIDE OF SINGING

Lea Baker, Region 25 Summer Music Camp, June 2024

The UPSide is buoyant, open, free, weightless, grounded sound that helps us sing in tune and with ease.

It's tall, spacious, joyful and free from tension.

Voices can move and grow and fully resonate in the UPSide. It's not a particular place to "put" your voice, it's the freedom from having no walls or structure to enclose your sound. It's allowing your voice to freely resonate in the spaces above your jaw and above your head, as well as behind it, around it and below it. There is no ceiling on the UPSide. It's 'Topless'!

Ensemble singers who access the UPSide lose their sound into the overall group resonance, making their musical leaders very happy!

Overtone in the human voice are ABOVE the pitch we sing. Those overtones (harmonics) live on the UPSide!

If you've ever felt or had someone describe your voice as 'reaching', 'tight', 'difficult', 'closed', 'heavy' or 'forced' - accessing the UPSide could be just the thing for you.

Let's take a closer look.

- Word sounds
- Onsets and releases
- Breath energy
- Diphthongs
- Held notes
- Repeated notes
- Descending notes

WORD SOUNDS

Move into and out of word sounds on the UPSide.

'Ng' in "long", "wrong", "song" etc, take the back of the tongue UP to the soft palate to create the 'ng'

't', 'd', 'g', 'b' - imagine these sounds being made lightly on the UPPER jaw, teeth, palate. See how this changes the flow and connection through your vocal line

'm' - are you squeezing the top lip down? Instead take the bottom lip UP to make the 'm' gently. Try it on "Some day when I'm awfully low..."

DIPHTHONGS

Where a word contains more than one vowel sound, we call this a 'diphthong'. Eg 'Sigh' is AH+EE. "Sah-----ee", with the AH being the primary sound.

Think UP for the 2nd sound (ee in the above example) especially if it falls on a descending note

"No" (OH+oo) think UP for the 'oo'.

ONSETS and RELEASES

Approach the making of sound from the UPside. If the note is a runway, you're a plane landing on it from above!

Imagine the best version of the note before you sing it

Choose an UPways energy for all phrase endings.

BREATH ENERGY

Breathe ABOVE the pitch for the note you're about to sing

Let the air fall into your lungs, then send a small steady flow of air UP through your vocal folds, to send them into efficient & effortless vibration

Notice the abdominal muscles easily come in and UP as the air is being used for singing

Release that abdominal tension at the end of the phrase, to allow new air to fall in from above.

PITCHES

Rather than think of notes as “up” or “down” (abstract), think of them as spinning out in all directions in an orb. A resonant orb.

HELD NOTES & REPEATED NOTES

Requires UPways energy to maintain pitch

Relies on a steady stream of air coming UP.

DESCENDING NOTES

They require UPways energy to maintain pitch. Gravity is not on our side!

Think 'straight out' rather than 'down' when descending.

THE DOWNSIDE (It's good!)

Our vocal instrument is within our body and our body is hugely important in releasing our voice to live in the UPside.

Physically, there is a feeling of being *lower* and more *grounded*, the more our voice is in the Upside. Weird hey!

Our body often instinctively goes DOWN as our sound goes UP (watch someone who is instinctively cheering for their favourite team with a "woo-hoo!")

As those higher notes soar, allow a lower body energy and centre of gravity.

If you have a habit of raising your chin the higher you sing, keep it level or even down a little, the higher you sing.

Sources & inspiration: NIDA Master Of Fine Arts, every Sweet Adeline coach I've ever had in front of my chorus. That's a LOT!

Lea Baker – Voice Teacher

<https://www.raiseyourvoice.net.au/>

<https://bettersinging.thinkific.com/>