

Singing Tips at your Fingertips



Helen Astrid

"This book is a goldmine." ~ Michael Nealon

Breathing Tips

taken from *Singing Tips at your Fingertips*

by Helen Astrid

- 1 Remember to sing with an open throat. The best way to achieve this is by breathing as if you're about to yawn. This lifts the soft palate and opens the throat at the back.
- 2 Did you know that singing strengthens the respiratory muscles and can help asthmatics breathe more easily?
- 3 When inhaling, imagine expanding your ribs as far away from you as possible.
- 4 Singing will increase your mental alertness as you'll be taking in more oxygen.
- 5 Make sure you take a long deep breath before you start to sing. Sometimes this can take at least one whole bar before singing.
- 6 When you've taken your breath, don't hold it - sing!
- 7 Did you know that your vocal cords can't stretch properly if you smoke? Without the ability to stretch, you can't sing high notes. So quit smoking!
- 8 By relaxing your knees you'll relax the stomach muscles. Then you'll be able to breathe properly and ultimately, sound better!
- 9 Your intercostal muscles are situated between the ribs and we use them when we inhale and exhale.
- 10 Your breath should fill the bottom of your lungs whilst the diaphragm moves down, giving a slight forward movement just above the waist; the ribs move out sideways using the intercostal muscles. When you exhale, the breath should always be controlled, never letting the ribs collapse.
- 11 Doing a work-out at your local gym isn't going to strengthen your diaphragm for singing. You need to vocalise daily.

- 12 Your diaphragm has several other functions apart from supporting your breath in singing; it's used when we speak, laugh, cry, go to the toilet and give birth.
- 13 Your voice is essentially a wind instrument as it requires air to make it sound. The very act of deep breathing helps get more oxygen to our brain and muscles, which in itself induces relaxation.
- 14 Be careful when you come to the end of a phrase and you're running out of breath. Try not to collapse. Aim to lift up your chest which should give you extra mileage.
- 15 The following is a useful exercise to extend your breath: inhale as deeply as possible, then sing on a low monotone (the same note) 'moo-ee' (without rushing) 'yah', holding the 'yah' for as long as possible. Keep it fairly quiet and support your breath as much as you can by pulling your stomach inwards. See how many seconds you can last. Try to increase your count each time.
- 16 Lie down on a comfortable flat surface and place a large book on your abdomen. When you take in a deep breath, keep your ribcage expanded as much as possible and try not to let the book drop down when you exhale.
- 17 A good way to extend your breath is to inhale as normal, then slowly exhale keeping your ribcage expanded. Don't collapse. As you exhale, count to ten to start with and try to increase the count each time.