



Elegant Diction

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Elegant Diction

Elegance: Refinement and grace in movement, appearance or manners. Restraint and grace of style. Scientific exactness and precision.



Elegant Diction

Diction: Choice and use of words in speech and writing.

Degree of clarity and distinctness of pronunciation in speech and singing.



Elegant Diction

“The Singers Manual of English Diction”
Madeleine Marshall

“What is diction? We may take “diction” to mean one word, and that word is “words”.

“She sings as if she had a hot potato in her mouth...

...as if she had a mouthful of mush

...as if her mouth were full of marbles.”

Elegant Diction

Careless or mannered pronunciation brought the audience such unconventional declarations as:

- ❖ **“I swallow my bride.”**
- ❖ **“I am yawning for your love.”**
- ❖ **“I am the master of my feet.”**
- ❖ **“I am wading for you.”**
- ❖ **“Nymphs and shepherds gum away.”**




Elegant Diction

Judging Category Description Book

Expression Category: judges the performers ability to communicate musically.

In vocal music, communication is strengthened by:

- 
- ❖ **the meaningful delivery of lyrics**
 - ❖ **musical diction**
 - ❖ **artistic phrasing**
 - ❖ **appropriate dynamics**
 - ❖ **projection of sincere emotion**
 - ❖ **Production of vowels**



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- ❖ **Injection of consonants**
 - ❖ **Turning of diphthongs**
 - ❖ **Attack and release of all syllables**
 - ❖ **Use of nuances**
 - ❖ **Use of vocal inflections**
 - ❖ **Lyrical presentation demonstrates absolute unity.**

Vowel Distortions

The most common vowel distortions result from:

- a. Failure to resonate vowels naturally in a uniform manner;
- b. Use of the wrong vowel sound, resulting in mispronunciation;
- c. Sustaining the incorrect vowel sound of a diphthong, or turning to the secondary sound either too early or at different times;
- d. Failure to sing the final sound of a diphthong, e.g., singing "smile" as "smahle" rather than "smaheele".
- e. Failure to produce musical vowel sounds.



Elegant Diction

We want to avoid pressured words squeezed into senselessness.

Clear singing is EASY singing.

Clarification of diction helps vocal relaxation and tonal improvement.

Vowels

Identify and agree on vowel sounds:

A. 5 Italian Vowel sounds

EE -- SEE

EH -- MET

AH -- FATHER

OH -- ROSE

OO -- TOOL

Vowels

OO as in Moon

AH as in Father

OH as in Moan

Æ as in Sad

AW as in Lawn

EH as in Red

UH as in Mud

IH as in Did

ÖÖ as in Soot

EE as in Need

The Dynamic Choral Director
Royal Stanton
Shawnee Press Inc.

Vowels

Exercises for vowels: (on your handout)

- A. Stage whisper and Cheek thumping
- B. Place clean finger on central part of tongue
- C. Sing 10 basic vowels on 1-3, 2-4, 3-5, 4-2, 1



Complete Words

We	Hat	Go	Girl
Sit	High	Law	Moon
Let	Spot	Joy	Mute
Late	Love	Now	Look

International Phonetic Alphabet Target Words

Consonant Distortions

The most common problems with regard to consonants are:

- a. Overemphasis of unimportant consonants, e.g., “lasTuh nighTuh was the enDuh of the worlDuh”;
- b. Anticipation of consonants, particularly “r”, in a sustained tone, e.g., “mother-r-r-r”;
- c. Dropped consonants in the middle of words, such as “remebber” instead of “remember” or “hot” instead of “heart”;
- d. Noticeable use of the wrong consonant sound, such as “sweedie” instead of “sweetie”.

Consonants

CHART OF ENGLISH CONSONANTS

EXPLOSIVES:

Voiced

(Pitch accompanies stoppage)

Unvoiced

(Pitch follows stoppage)

← same stoppage →

FULL STOPPAGES:

B : Bat

↔

P : Pat

D : Dog

↔

T : Tog

G : Got

↔

K : Cot

J : Jeer

↔

CH : Cheer

Consonants

PARTIAL STOPPAGES:

Voiced

Unvoiced

V : Vile

↔

F : File

Z : Zeal

↔

S : Seal

TH : Thy

↔

TH : Thigh

ZH : Pleasure

↔

SH : Shout

Consonants

CONSONANTS WHICH SUSTAIN TONE

L : Let

M : Met

N : Net

NG : riNG (same stoppage as G and K – see above)

UR : pURR (used within or at ends of words,
can be sustained.)

R : Run (Used at beginnings of words, may be rolled
never sustained)

Consonants

VOWEL-FORMATION CONSONANTS:

Form to say the vowel, but do not sustain it, passing immediately to the vowel of the word

W : Will = (OO) IH I

Y : Yet = (EE) EH T

ASPIRATES

Made with the expulsion of breath only

H : His

WH : When

Consonants

Exercises for Elegant Consonants:

1. Speak consonants to the rhythm of Jingle Bells, London Bridge, Deck the Halls, Yankee Doodle

2. Ff ch ff ch ff ch ch/ ff ch ff ch ff ch ch

p *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

3. Ff ss k sh/ ff ss k sh/ ff ss k sh/ ff ss k sh

Consonants

TEXT WITH ALLITERATION

What a to do to die today at a minute or two to two
A thing distinctly hard to say but harder still to do
For they'll beat a tattoo at twenty to two
With a Rat-a-ta-ta Ta-ta-ta Ta-ta-ta Too
And the dragon will come when he hears the drum
At a minute or two to two today
At a minute or two to two.

Synchronization

An example illustrating what happens when all elements of vertical synchronization are not produced by all voices at the same instant.

Vertical Synchronization

Tenor: Ah---eeStol – l – theGol – l – l dFro - -mYou---rHai-----r

Lead: Ah---eeSto - - l – theGol - - l – dFro - - mYou---rHai-----r

Bari: Ah –ee- - Sto-l – theGol - -l – dFro – mYou---rHai-----r

Bass: Ah ---eeSto - -l – theGol - -l – dFro - -mYour---rHai-r-r-r



Elegant Diction

Our vowels are matched.

Our consonants are resonant and precise,
our diphthongs are turned (together),
we attack with grace and release with style.

What else could there be to produce an artistic
sound?

Now the emotion, the nuance, the inflection.

Elegant Diction

Many techniques intended to improve diction are built on percussive enunciation that has no place in either singing or speaking. They produce notes not phrases.

Above all, the singer should not confuse heavy syllabification with expressive singing.

Richard Miller
“The Art of Singing”



Elegant Diction

What is the be-all and end-all of the art of song but to transport sounds of living emotion to attending ears?

When text matches music in communication everybody wins—poet, composer, director, performers and their listeners.

Dorothy Uris
“To Sing In English”