

# Guidelines for Personal Voice Instruction (PVI)

## GUIDELINES:

1. Put the singer at ease before asking her to sing.
  - Work with simple, familiar exercises to keep concentration on basic techniques.
  - Keep your body language positive.
  - Keep the session tension-free.
2. Listen to the singer, using your eyes and ears to evaluate.
  - Listen for obvious breaks in range changes.
  - Listen for “force” or muscling”.
  - Listen and watch for breathing style and breath timing.
  - Watch for alignment issues, especially when visual routine is added.
3. Tell her 3 positive things you see/hear.
4. Ask her...*“What would you like to improve?”*
5. Singer sings AGAIN. You listen for #4.
6. Give specific advice.
  - Demonstrate the proper technique.
  - Ask for permission to touch the singer, if you need to use touch as a teaching tool.
7. Singer tries new techniques.
8. Singer gives feedback about how it felt/worked.
9. Give the singer no more than 2 or 3 areas to work on (homework).
  - Provide the singer with exercises, if appropriate, that will help her improve her areas of need.
  - Provide closure to the PVI with a summary of the points covered and instructions for improvement.
10. Give thanks to each other for the exchange.

## Ideas For Giving PVI'S:

Start at the beginning. When analyzing a voice, look for:

- Body alignment.
  - Weight balanced evenly on both feet.
  - Feet hip bone width apart.
  - Knees slightly bent or “soft”.
  - Pelvis/hips slightly tucked.
  - Shoulders back and down (not tense).
  - Chin level – not tense.
  - Facial posture.
- Lifted countenance – happiness, anticipation, “ah-ha”.
- Jaw dropped easily from the back (not chin from the front).
- Breathing techniques.
  - Straight up the face.
  - Maintain flexible body movement.
- Sound production through open throat.
  - Open up “moon roof” of mouth.
  - Space between upper and lower jaw.
  - Relaxed tongue/throat/jaw.
- Bubble exercises.
- Wider space and more air as you move to higher notes.
- Resonance.
  - Bounce sound off all the hard surfaces in the mouth.
  - Plug your nose as you sing, open palate if it sounds nasal.
- Box shape mouth.
  - Knuckles in cheeks – any exercise, move them out slowly, memorizing the open feeling.
- Lah-beh-dah-meh-nee-poh-too-lah-beh – have student direct with hands, “way cultural”, all resonators open.
- Sing with head upside down (some singers need to sit for this exercise).
- Sing through a yawn (Yah ahhhhh).
  - Articulation/Intonation.
    - Think wide tall open vowels on all notes.
  - If giving a PVI to more than one person:
    - Have the singers face each other.
    - Work with all similar voice types together, for example vibrato problems.

## Specific Vocal Challenges

- Flattening/Intonation.
- Think wide tall open vowels on all notes.
- Smile with drop in molars.
- Think taller in back and smile as you sing; be sure drop is in back, not in front.
- Listen for and think singing an octave above; therefore lift happens.
- Ascend “joyfully”, descend “reluctantly”.

- Higher notes.
- Wider space and more air as you go up.
- Don't jam soft palate up.
- Higher notes require more energy, space, depth, more soft palate lift.
- Let the high notes happen, don't make them happen.
- Open back of throat, but don't sing there.
- Lower notes.
- Sing into hard palate.
- Less open jaw as you descend.
- Think "higher quality", not bearing down on lower notes.
- More air under the tone NOT in the tone. Focus forward, no fog.
- Don't swallow low notes.
- Lower register requires less energy, space, depth, less soft palate lift.
- Open back of throat, but don't sing there.
- Vibrato.
- Note that she has one or doesn't. If it is a tremolo, or an undesirable wobble, check breath support. Have her bend at the waist and sustain a pitch.
- Control of the vibrato is done with the breathing muscles and the mind.

### **Other Considerations:**

A PVI is not intended to immediately fix a failed performance audition.

Focus on the singer and avoid showing off your own knowledge.

Every voice will always be a work in progress and every voice has its own sensitivity to new instruction.

Consider carefully before directing a voice to "match" another voice to avoid causing a singer to create a false manipulated sound not really her own.

Make several attempts at a method before changing direction. Allow time for the brain to create new pathways in the ear to hear new dimension in the sound.

Recognize when a singer needs instruction that is beyond your skill level and seek guidance from a musical director. This may occur after the initial PVI or later during the student's vocal skills development.

Praise publicly; criticize privately.

#### Sources:

Director, Faculty, Musical Leaders Workshop; June 20-21, 2008  
 Shirley Kout PVI class, February 6, 2009  
 Sweet Adelines International 2008-2010 In-Region RMT Training

## PVI Instructor Follow-Up Form

Member Name \_\_\_\_\_ PVI Instructor \_\_\_\_\_

Date of PVI \_\_\_\_\_ PVI Topic \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I feel this person should have another PVI on this topic for the following reasons:

\_\_\_\_\_ I feel this person is ready to advance to another PVI topic. I recommend the next topic(s) be:

**Please return this form to the PVI Administrator immediately following the PVI.**

## PVI Chorus Member Feedback Form

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ PVI Instructor \_\_\_\_\_

Date of PVI \_\_\_\_\_ Topic \_\_\_\_\_ Did you tape your session? \_\_\_\_

*Please be as honest with your comments as possible. Your feedback is vital in helping improve our PVI program. Comments will be shared with the instructor and your anonymity will be protected.*

What new things did you learn that will be helpful to you?

Describe the homework assignments/exercises the instructor gave you to help you improve.

What challenges, if any, do you still face with this PVI topic?

Do you feel you are ready to advance to the next PVI topic? If not, why?

Was your PVI instructor knowledgeable in the subject matter? If not, in what areas do you feel she needs to improve?

Were the instructor's directions/suggestions communicated well? Were they easy to understand and follow?

Would you recommend this instructor to others? If not, why?

Additional comments:

**Please return this form to the PVI Administrator as soon as possible following your PVI.  
Thank you!**