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Voice Research: The Five Best Vocal Warm-Up Exercises

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Abstract (Abstract): Enumerates the five most beneficial warm-up exercises for vocalists. Describes each exercise and what it accomplishes. Lists the exercises as (1) lip trill, tongue trill, humming, or phonation into narrow tubes on glides, scales, or arpeggios, over a wide pitch range; (2) two-octave pitch glides, first down only, then up and down, on high vowels; (3) forward tongue roll and extension, vowel sequence, scales; (4) "messa di voce," proceeding from a partially occluded tract to high vowels, then to low vowels; and (5) "staccato" on "arpeggios."

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Ingo Titze Ph.D.

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One of the pleasures of investigating the singing voice over the past thirty years has been the opportunity for me to visit the studios of many great teachers. With every visit comes a new understanding of an old principle. There are many variations of a few basic themes. This is certainly the case with exercises that are used for vocal warm-up and strengthening the voice in terms of range and flexibility. Opposite are five exercises (or perhaps groups of exercises) that have strong physiologic justification and are prevalent in the majority of studios.

Specific musical notation could be used to write out these exercises, but that would defeat the purpose of making them generic, i.e., making them *classes* of exercises. It's the variations that one can create with these classes that are ultimately as important as the exercises themselves, because students get bored with specific versions.

Exercise	What Is Accomplished
1. Lip trill, tongue trill, humming, or phonation into narrow tubes (all partial occlusions of vocal tract) on glides, scales, or arpeggios, over wide pitch range	Gets respiratory muscles into full action rapidly; Minimizes upward force on vocal folds because of positive oral pressure; Spreads the vocal folds to vibrate their edges only; Lowers phonation threshold pressure by providing an inertive acoustic load; Stretches vocal folds to maximum length
2. Two-octave pitch glides, first down only, then up and down, on high vowels /i/ or /u/; when going up and down (more advanced), a transition from low chest to high pure falsetto and, finally, a mixed voice are targeted.	Also gives maximal stretch to vocal folds (first ligament, then muscle); Provides maximum dichotomy between TA and CT muscles, then requires unity between them; Avoids the difficult passaggi; Gets F_0 above F_1 for varying acoustic loads

3. Forward tongue roll and extension, vowel sequence /a/-/i/, scales	Creates independence between the phonatory and articulatory structures; Loosens tongue and jaw; Helps keep vertical larynx position stable during articulation
4. <i>Messa di voce</i> , proceeding from a partially occluded tract to high vowels, then to low vowels	Engages the layers of vocal fold tissue gradually in vibration, medial to lateral; Helps singer match tension in muscle to tension in ligament; Tests symmetry of crescendo versus decrescendo control under continually decreasing lung volume; Makes all intrinsic muscles of the larynx work in coordination with changing lung pressure
5. <i>Staccato</i> on <i>arpeggios</i>	Elicits clean and rapid voice onset, establishing a dominant mode of vibration of the vocal folds; Trains adductor/abductor muscles simultaneously with tensor muscles during pitch change

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Ingo R. Titze is Distinguished Professor of Speech Science and Voice at the University of Iowa and Executive Director of the Wilbur James Gould Voice Research Center at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. His formal education is in physics and electrical engineering, but he has devoted much of his studies to vocal music and speech. Dr. Titze has published over 150 articles in scientific and educational journals, co-edited two books titled Vocal Fold Physiology , and has authored a book called Principles of Voice Production. He has lectured throughout the world and has appeared on such educational television series as Innovation, Quantum, and Beyond 2000. He is a recipient of the William and Harriott Gould Award for laryngeal physiology, the Jacob Javits Neuroscience Investigation Award, the Claude Pepper Award, the Quintana Award, and the American Laryngological Association Award. He is a Fellow of the Acoustical Society of America and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Dr. Titze has served on a number of national advisory boards and scientific review groups, including the Scientific Advisory Board of the Voice Foundation and the Division of Research Grants of the National Institutes of Health. He is director of the National Center for Voice and Speech, a multi-instructional consortium. In addition to his scientific endeavors, Dr. Titze continues to be active as a singer. He is married to Kathy Titze and has four children. Mail should be addressed to Ingo R. Titze, National Center for Voice and Speech, 330 WJSHC, Iowa City, IA 52242. Telephone (319) 335-6600 .

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