

# Practicing: the basics

## Practice mantra: diligence, mindfulness, patience

\* **Find a quiet, private place with a keyboard.** If a keyboard is not available, or you have no piano skills, it's ok just to listen to the recording.

\***Have everything you need with you.** Music, water, pencil, etc.

\*Turn your phone on airplane mode! **Freedom from distractions is important.** (Don't worry you can take breaks to check it later)

\***Listen to the recording of your last lesson, starting at the beginning.** Sing along with the recording, paying attention to the changes the instructor is asking for. Feel free to skip over small talk for the sake of time, but don't skip over explanations and discussions.

\*When you hear the instructor make a change, pause the recording after. **Ask yourself these questions:**

- What change did the instructor make?
- What did I hear before and after? (On the recording)
- What did I feel before and after?
- What did I do to make that change?
- Can I do it again?

\***Try and replicate the change a few times.** What does it feel like? Resume the recording. Keep singing along with it, trying to make the change through the rest of the exercise. Keep your momentum up.

\***Continue like this through all of the vocal exercises.** Take a 5-minute break every 20 minutes! This will help you maintain your focus. Use a timer and **be diligent.**

Remember, when you're singing you can't trust your own ears. We only get part of the audio signal. We have to trust our instructor, the recording, and our physical sensations.

\***Don't worry!** Don't worry if you can't feel or hear the changes right away. Don't be discouraged. **The brain has to build new nerve pathways to learn new skills and coordination.** Short and frequent practice sessions are the best way to do this. This is what practicing is for. The changes will happen if you are diligent.

\***Listen to the repertoire section of the lesson.** Sing along with the recording and listen to changes the instructor made.

\*Ask yourself the same questions you did in the exercise section of the lesson. Try to replicate the changes. **Make a note in your music!!**

**\*Review technical issues from other pieces of music** you may not have worked on in your last lesson. If you followed the instructions above they should be written down in your music. Spend 5 minutes on each specific issue. If you practice every day, 5 minutes will be enough. **Fight the temptation to practice things you're already good at!**

All of this should take about an hour, maybe a little more. We are going for frequency and repetition, not duration. **There is no cramming for voice lessons.**

Now it's time for non singing practice. This can be done at the start, the end, or another time in the day. It's just as important as technique, since music that is not learned sufficiently will shut a singer down very quickly.

\*Learn notes, rhythms, entrances, languages to the best of your ability. If you need help, ask for it from your instructor or coach. Be mindful! Music learned with errors is very difficult to correct.

\*Find recordings of the piece. Find and listen to as many as possible. This way you avoid memorizing mistakes or different stylistic interpretations. At the same time you'll be gaining an understanding of different performance practices and a familiarity of the piece

\*Research the composer and the poet. Often you will find historical context that will change the way you look at a piece of music. If you find something interesting on the Internet print it off and keep it in your music notebook.

\*If in a foreign language, write a word for word translation into the music. Print a poetic translation and keep it in your notebook.