

Getting people singing well.....

The ideas below will help get your class singing confidently, well and together.

Starters

Physical warm-up

This should be something to engage people, and wake them up physically and mentally: shakes, funny faces, a sequence of movements, or any other short physical on-the-spot movement.

Example: Pretend there is chewing gum stuck on the back of one hand and shake it off. Then imagine it has moved somewhere else and shake, e.g. foot, shoulder, hip etc.

Posture

Check everyone is standing well. Check that weight is evenly on both feet, feet are directly underneath the shoulders, shoulders are relaxed and the back is tall. Some groups like to have children stand at the front to check the rest of the class.

Example: One way of checking that posture is good is to stretch arms up and look at the ceiling. Then drop arms but keep looking up. Then slowly bring the head down. This should keep shoulders and arms relaxed, but the spine straight and tall.

Breathing

Check that the class is breathing deeply (using the diaphragm) and not shallowly (with tight chest and raised shoulders). Check they understand how the lungs work and where the air goes (inflating down and outwards from the bottom of the rib cage).

Example: To start with place hands below ribs, front and back, and breathe out as much as possible. Then feel how the air expands when you relax and breathe in naturally.

Once this is easy, try exhaling over 6, 10 or 14 beats making a "ssss" sound and then breathing in over 2 beats.

Sing any familiar song, such as The Penguin Song. Use the [Sing Up website](#) to find lots of fun and easy songs. Practise taking deep breaths before the song and between phrases. If you're counting 1,2,3,4 to start, think about when you're going to breathe in e.g. 1,2, breathe (3,4). This will immediately make the sound bigger.

Other things to try out....

- If singing in tune is difficult try singing really quietly, or humming the tune. This can really help with listening, and this will in turn help tuning. Also, try humming the starting note before singing a song. Some children take longer than others to find the first note, but are fine once they have started.
- To improve diction, try warming up the voice by speaking or singing a tongue twister, e.g. 'Peter Piper' or 'She sells sea shells'.
- To increase volume, try humming angrily (get the class to imagine they're being kept in at lunch time and given extra homework) and then opening the mouth. The sound should 'explode' forward. The class can then try to recreate this 'forward' sound when they sing.
- To increase the range of notes a class is happy singing, try making sounds like motorbikes or sirens going up and down, led by a visual signal from the leader (moving a finger from high to low etc). Explore how high or low people's voices can go. Try passing an invisible conducting pencil round a circle – the leader draws the sound in the air and then passes it on to the next child.