

CânSing top ten warm-up exercises

The single most important thing you can do for vocal health is to start off any singing activity with a good warm up.

These are the top ten recommended warm-up exercises by the CânSing team.



1

Name	Osian Rowlands, animateur
Name of warm-up	Name game
Type of exercise	Vocal/rhythm/body/breathing
When you use it	At the beginning of the session
Why you like it	It's a fun and relaxed way of getting to know everybody (and nobody has noticed yet that I can't click my fingers!).
How to	The aim is to try and keep a steady pulse. Standing in a circle, learners tap their thighs on beat 1, clap their hands on beat 2, click their right fingers on beat 3, and click their left fingers on beat 4. Going round the circle, learners call out their own name anywhere during the four beats, but by keeping a steady pulse.
Hints and tips	Keep a steady pace at all times!
Ideas for development	Introduce a 5th beat, where learners tap their thighs on beats 1 and 2, clap on beat 3, click their right fingers on beat 4, and click their left fingers on beat 5. You could call your own name on beats 1 and 2, and call somebody else's name on beat 4 and 5: 1 2 3 4 5 Osian Rowlands to Bart Simpson

Top ten warm-up exercises

2

Name	Owain Gethin Davies, consultant
Name of warm-up	A E I O U
Type of exercise	Vocal/rhythm/body/breathing
When to use	At the beginning of a singing session to develop learners' confidence and to project their voices
Why you like it	This is a fun call and response activity that learners enjoy performing. A confident learner can take the responsibility of calling after you have demonstrated this.
How to	Stand in a circle and shout or sing out the vowel letters.
Hints and tips	Ask all learners to respond and imitate any gestures you make. You may wish to add body movement to your performance.
Ideas for development	Vary the dynamics and the pace when calling. Give some element of surprise to the call to see if all learners respond.

3

Name	Aled Powys Williams, animateur
Name of warm-up	Leonardo
Type of exercise	Vocal/rhythm/body/breathing
When you use it	Can be used any time during the session to help focus the group
Why you like it	It's a fun exercise that helps relax the group, as well as improve their focus. Laughter is inevitable during the development of the exercise.
How to	Stand in a circle or face the front. Using the five points of the body (left foot/ left hand/ head/right hand/right foot), learners do a stamp/click/sound on each. Start on the left foot.
Hints and tips	If you can't demonstrate the exercise, 'mirror image' when the group is facing the front, by turning your back and leading the exercise.
Ideas for development	Do the cycle to different rhythms, such as: 'football rhythm' - DA, DA, DA DA DA, DA DA DA DA, DA DA. 'rugby rhythm' - A-GI, A-GI, A-GI, OI, OI, OI. As well as using different rhythms, vary the dynamics and pace, and try adding words.



Top ten warm-up exercises

4

Name	Jenny Pearson, animateur
Name of warm-up	Boom chicka boom
Type of exercise	Vocal/rhythm/body/breathing
When you use it	Towards the beginning of a session after a body and breathing exercise. It's also handy if attention and energy levels are flagging.
Why you like it	It's 'up tempo' and energetic, great for establishing a sense of pulse and good for body/vocal/rhythmic co-ordination.
How to	Keep a steady pulse with your feet and don't start until the pulse is completely secure. It's an echo warm up, so the leader starts: Leader: Boom chicka boom... Group echo: Boom chicka boom... Leader: Boom chicka rocka chicka rocka chicka boom... A haaaaa... A haaaaa... E heeee... E heeee...
Hints and tips	Repeat at a low pitch and then a high pitch, in a silly nasal sound, 'posh' voice, and so on ... the dafter the better!
Ideas for development	The pulse can be switched from the feet to the hands (clapping), and the feet can then do the rhythm along with the voice. By internalising the chant, it can become a rhythm and co-ordination exercise, with the pulse kept by hands, the rhythm by feet, and visa versa. Learners can take it in turns to be the leader. The possibilities are endless!

5

Name	Elin Llwyd, animateur
Name of warm-up	Yellow Submarine
Type of exercise	Vocal/rhythm/body/breathing
When you use it	At the beginning of a session as a gentle warm up and fun start to the lesson
Why you like it	It's a gentle exercise for warming the voice, but mostly a fun exercise to develop good co-ordination and internalising rhythm and pulse.
How to	Start with singing the chorus gently. Sing the chorus and clap the beat/pulse. Sing the chorus and stamp the beat/pulse in your feet. Sing the chorus and clap the rhythm. Sing the chorus and stamp the rhythm in your feet. Sing the chorus and try clapping the rhythm and stamping the beat in your feet.
Hints and tips	Try the opposite to above - sing the chorus and clap the beat/pulse while stamping the rhythm in your feet. If you are not familiar with the words or melody, listen or get a copy from the internet.
Ideas for development	Keep the tempo nice and steady to begin with. Try to master clapping the rhythm and stamping the beat before attempting the next step.
Ideas for development	This is an exercise that has a natural progression, but once you've mastered all the steps, try taking the tempo a bit faster. Maybe even try the exercise without singing, to internalise the melody and concentrate on the co-ordination.

Top ten warm-up exercises

6

Name	Jenny Walker, amateur
Name of warm-up	What's for tea tonight?
Type of exercise	Vocal/rhythm/body/breathing
When you use it	To start a session/build confidence in part singing
Why you like it	It's very engaging and helps break down barriers, especially for boys or groups reluctant to sing.
How to	Divide learners into four groups and stand in a circle. See attached sheet for rhythms.
Hints and tips	Ask the group to identify the parts of the song (verse, verse, chorus, bridge, chorus) to reinforce the structure.
Ideas for development	Write a second verse with a new rhythm. Write a simple melody to fit the words/chorus (for example, build a dominant 7th chord for the verse/chords I, IV, V for the chorus; this could support work on 12-bar blues).

7

Name	Owain Gethin Davies, consultant
Name of warm-up	Lemonade
Type of exercise	Vocal/rhythm/body/breathing
When to use	At the beginning of a singing session to develop learners' confidence and to project their voices
Why you like it	This is a fun clapping game activity that learners enjoy playing together.
How to	Everyone stands in a open space and recites the following verse (instructions are in brackets): Lemonade (three claps), crunchy ice (three claps) Beat it once (three claps), beat it twice (three claps) Turn around (turn around), touch the ground, (touch ground), freeze (freeze in any position) The first one to move is out of the activity.
Hints and tips	Ask all learners to respond and imitate any gestures you make. You may wish to add body movement to your performance.
Ideas for development	Vary the pace when reciting the verse. Give some element of surprise to the call to see if all learners respond.



Top ten warm-up exercises

8

Name	Suzanne Barnes, project manager
Name of warm-up	Relax and breath
Type of exercise	Vocal/rhythm/body/breathing
When to use	At the beginning of a singing session to develop breathing technique and to relax the whole body
Why you like it	This is a relaxing activity to get everyone focused at the beginning of a session.
How to	Stand straight with your feet slightly apart, keeping your shoulders down. Start with simple slow breathing. Imagine you are filling a bottle of water, filling from the bottom. Let the air flow in and out naturally.
Hints and tips	Ask all learners to take their time and control the flow of air by breathing in over a count of four, holding for four and out for four.
Ideas for development	Hang both hands in front of you; lift them out to the side, breathing in as you do. Blow out the air and lower the arms.

9

Name	Sue Cottrell, DCELLS representative
Name of warm-up	Oh, the grand old Duke of York
Type of exercise	Vocal/rhythm/body/breathing
When to use	As an energiser and ice-breaker at the beginning of a singing session
Why you like it	Because it starts with a song that everybody knows, and is not too complicated.
How to	Sing 'Oh the grand old Duke of York', marching on the spot as you sing. Sing again, this time replacing the word 'up' with a clap high above your head, and the word 'down' with a clap on the floor.
Hints and tips	Ask learners to sing the words 'up' and 'down' in their head, that is, to internalise as they clap.
Ideas for development	Have some fun by swapping around the actions for 'up' and 'down', that is, clap on the floor for the word 'up', and clap high in the air for the word 'down'.



Top ten warm-up exercises

10

Name	Owain Gethin Davies, consultant
Name of warm-up	Singing register
Type of exercise	Vocal/rhythm/body/breathing
When to use	At the beginning of a singing session as an alternative way of taking the register
Why you like it	This is a fun way of registering the class through a call and response activity. A confident learner can take the responsibility of calling/taking the register after you have demonstrated this.
How to	Ask everyone to stand/sit in a circle or face the front.
Hints and tips	<p>Call each learner's name as you would register the group at the beginning of a lesson. Rather than saying their names, sing a simple melody to their name and use hand gestures to imitate the shape of the melody. Ask all learners to respond and sing the same melody.</p> <p>Confident learners can respond and improvise their own melody with answer - 'Yes, I'm here'.</p>
Ideas for development	Vary the dynamics and the pace when calling individual learners' names. Give some element of surprise to the call to see if all learners respond in the same way.



