

**I practice my music once a week - while I'm driving to my voice lesson:
A Guide for Practicing Singing On Your Own**

Just like other instruments, it's important to practice voice! This guide is to help you structure your practice sessions outside of your voice lessons, both singing and non-singing.

Practice Session Outline

Everyone is different! This is just one way to approach and structure a practice session: take what resonates and leave the rest. We all practice on our own schedule for our specific lifestyle and singing needs; while some folks might practice an hour daily, others may practice half an hour once a week. No matter what your routine and needs call for, remember there is no one correct way to practice and to build in time to rest. Although a piano can be a helpful tool when practicing, there are many ways to practice without access to a piano (outlined below). If practicing at home isn't an option, using the practice/music rooms at school, using a music room at church, or contacting a local college to ask about their practice spaces are good places to start. I've used a long drive in my car for many practice sessions. :)

1. Set your Goal (and a Timer)
 - a. What is the intention of your practice today? Determine whether you are trying to learn a new part of your music, practice/apply a technique you learned in your lesson, work on your acting, memorize your piece, etc. Set a time limit for your practice session - usually using the same length of time as your lesson or less can help to maintain your focus/not overwork your voice.
2. Warm Up
 - a. How long does it take your voice to warm up? Usually we warm up in voice lessons for somewhere between 10-20 minutes, but it's always good to warm your voice up for at least 5-10 minutes before you start to practice at home.
 - b. Unsure what exercises to do for your warm up? Record your warm-up with your voice teacher during your next lesson or Google/YouTube some good warm-ups for your voice type. Humming, lip trilling, or using a straw is always a gentle addition to your warm-up repertoire!
3. Apply Your Goal to Your Repertoire
 - a. Learning Your Music
 - i. Break your music into smaller chunks and go through them one at a time. Some singers go through their sections chronologically, while others start with the hardest or easiest sections first - there isn't a wrong way to learn your music. It is often helpful to work on the rhythm, then pitches, then the words of a section before adding an adjacent section. Once you learn section one, you can begin on section two, and once you have section two,

you can go back and review section one and two back to back, adding on more and more sections as you go. If you don't have access to a piano to play your pitches, using solfege, practice tracks, or listening to recordings can help you to anchor into the melody.

- b. Applying Voice Techniques
 - i. Try applying the techniques you've been working on with your teacher to your warm up and in your pieces. The more you do them, the more they become muscle memory, and you can continue to add more advanced techniques to your arsenal. For example, if you've been using a lip trill to access better breath support in a song: use a lip trill in some of the exercises in your warm up as well as when you practice your piece, and then slowly remove the lip trill as you go. Let your teacher know if you notice a difference, understand, or enjoy using the techniques from your lesson - all voices are different, and a good teacher caters their exercises specifically for you.
 - c. Memorizing Your Piece
 - i. Memory techniques are different for everyone. Some people write and rewrite the lyrics over and over again, some people prefer to be quizzed on the lyrics by a friend, some people sing each line repetitively, and some people sing along with a recording or karaoke track. It's important to build memorizing time into your practice, that way it isn't a last minute stress before you perform!
 - d. Working on Your Acting
 - i. People connect to their pieces in many ways. Some people like to write subtext and staging into their music, some people like to watch videos of other people's performances to get inspiration, and some people like to use a mirror, take videos of themselves, or perform their songs for friends and family. Give yourself the space to explore how you like to act, as well as to analyze and get feedback on your performance (either from yourself or others!).
4. Reflect on Your Practice Session
- a. Some students keep detailed practice journals about what they accomplished during their practice sessions, but even a short mental reflection can help you to feel satisfied in your session and prepare you for the next one. Was there something you didn't get to today? Keep it in mind for next time. Questions that came up during the session? Keep track and ask your voice teacher at your next lesson. Take time to reward yourself for doing a great job practicing, whether you got done a little or a lot. :)

Non-Singing Practice Sessions

Recovering from sickness, feeling tired, or just not feeling like singing today? There are lots of ways to practice without singing.

1. Annotating
 - a. Annotation can mean marking your breaths or phrasing, writing in translations or staging, counting rhythms in difficult sections, or highlighting your part in scores. I often write in my scores at the same time as I listen to them, that way I can make note of specific dynamic markings, phrasing, textual emphasis, or tempo changes that may be traditional or interesting that I would like to use when I sing the piece.
2. Listening
 - a. Listening to your pieces helps to get the melody in your ears, contextualizes the accompaniment, and shows you unique interpretations of musicality. Even if there is a specific singer you really like, listening to many versions and singers helps us to not to cement one “correct” version of the song that we feel like we have to copy and or imitate when we sing.
3. Reflecting
 - a. Recording your lessons and listening back to them helps us understand voice techniques and exercises as well as hear our own voices. Reflection can be as simple as listening back and mentally making note of the exercises and sounds that really stand out. Many people record their thoughts in a journal. For example, listing a particular exercise or approach and stating the difference it made in the sound production helps us understand where and when using that technique can be helpful in other songs, i.e. “lifting the piano exercise made accessing my upper register/head voice easier in both warm-ups and while we were working on my song... I can apply this to (insert different song) where I also need to use my head voice.” Reflecting helps us determine what we need to work on when we practice as well as discover questions we may have for future lessons.
4. Watching
 - a. Watching recorded or live performances can help to inform your facial expressions and body movements - watching videos of your songs in the context of a full show, recital, competition, audition tape, or other type of performance can give insight to character choices and might inspire your own interpretation of the character and piece.
5. Monologuing
 - a. Speaking through the lyrics without the context of the rhythm and pitches can create unique textual emphasis and connect us with the words emotionally, as well as help with memory and acting.