

Vocal Warm-up Sheet

Breath

Breath is the fuel for everything you do. It carries everything; our actions, our feelings, our words. You need to be able to control your breathing so that the way you phrase speeches will be under your control.

- Lie on the ground, knees up, feet flat on the floor. Relax. Breathe into your whole body and sigh out. When you breathe in, imagine your whole being is softening and lightening. Ask yourself, 'Where does the tension sit in my body? Is it the shoulders?' If so, move them slightly. Feel all the tension falling into the floor.
- Now put your hands lightly on your tummy. Breathe in. Feel the breath going through the nose and right down under your hands. That is not what is really happening but it helps to imagine it like that. (It's the large diaphragm muscle moving down which makes the tummy expand.) Now breathe out through the mouth, pulling the tummy in gently as you do.
- Take a number of breaths in this way and, as you breathe out, voice them softly with a soft 'ahh' sound.
- Whilst the ribs are important, try and focus more on the tummy and breathe 'into' it. The tummy expands when you breathe in.
- Breathe in for four, hold in for four, out for four (x2).
- Then breathe in for six, hold in for six, out for six (x2).
- Then breathe in for eight, hold in for eight, out for eight (x2).
- Still on the floor, exercise the diaphragm. Pant lightly by pulling in the stomach, then relax. Breathe in and repeat the process. Don't worry necessarily about making a sound. Just do it for a little while. Later, see if you can pant three times without relaxing and taking a breath. You often feel this movement when sobbing or laughing. Add a little sound when ready.

Resonance

The more resonant your voice, the less effort you will need, the less likely you'll be to injure it, the richer it will sound, and the more powerful it will be.

- Still on the floor, give your face a good massage. Blow through loose lips. Move your head from side to side before bringing it back to the centre.
- Breathe in for four, hold for four, breathe out on a 'mmmm'. Make sure the hum comes from your mouth as well as your nose (x4).

- Do the same again, start on 'mmmmm' and then open your mouth for 'AAAAH'. Feel how the resonance helps the richness and projection of the vowel sound (x4).
- Sit up *slowly!* (If you're too fast, you might feel dizzy.) Keep the back straight if you can. Circle the shoulders to relax them, and then do the last exercise again. Feel your lips with your fingers. Direct the hum to your fingers. Move your hand to the top of your head. Now make the sound, directing the vibration there. Now feel your chest. Direct the vibration to your chest.

Diction

Practising diction helps make your words clearer, and makes your ideas and characters more understandable for the audience.

- Chew vigorously. Make your face as big as you can/as small as you can.
- Stretch your tongue to your nose/then to your chin (x3).
- Tongue to the left/to the right (x3).
- Put the tip of the tongue on the outside of the teeth and roll it round the mouth each way (x4).
- Repeat putting the tongue on the inside of the teeth and circling the tongue (x4).
- Blow out through the mouth with loose lips.
- 'Tttt' – 'llll' – 'dddd'. These are all tip of the tongue exercises. Do each one three or four times, e.g. 'tttt tttt tttt tah' (x4), then 'llll llll llll lah' (x4), etc.
- Then 'tttt llll dddd' (x6).
- Do 'bbbb kkkk'. Notice how with 'buh' the sound is focused at the front of the mouth. 'Kuh' is at the back of the mouth. Try 'pppp' and 'gggg' similarly.
- Finally, knit your fingers into a cradle, breathe in, and, turning the palms outwards, stretch to the ceiling. Breathe out and bring the hands back to the chest (x4).
- Now shake out the whole body for about twenty seconds.
- Check in with your body and experience how much more alive it feels.