



<http://susananders.com/just-songs-vocal-workout-vol-1>

This sample portion of the 5th edition of the guidebook includes the Table of Contents, How to Use the CDs and Guidebook, and Chapter 4: Wade in the Water/Placing Low Notes. The guidebook is the same for all three versions of the vocal workout.

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How to Use the Book & CDs

You can use the CDs and guidebook separately or together to warm up and strengthen your voice. How you use them will depend on several factors: whether you are a beginning voice student or already know some technique; if you do most of your singing in your car; if reading lyrics as you sing helps or hinders your concentration; and whether you want to learn the mechanics of general voice technique or simply want to warm up and improve your voice without much instruction.

Quick-start for Working with the CDs

Listen to the first two tracks, then listen and sing along with me (or Geoffrey Tozer if you have the baritone/soprano CDs) on Disc 1 until you learn the melody for the first song, using the recommended warmup sound. Basses should sing an octave lower than me, and sopranos should sing an octave higher than Geoffrey. After that:

1) Work with the next instructional track and song, continuing on until you've worked through the first nine songs, singing the warmup sound or sounds. Then start back at the first song and go through the songs again, learning and singing the lyric. Or—

2) Stay with the first song until you've learned the lyric before you move on to the second song, and continue learning the first nine songs that way.

3)

Working with the CDs: More Details

Try the different warmup sounds I suggest for each song to see if they work for you—a sound that warms up one voice may do nothing for another, so you will be the ultimate judge. A warmed up voice feels flexible, resonant and strong. You should not feel much sensation in

your throat at any time. If you do, you may be wearing your voice out instead of strengthening it.

Beginners especially should work with the warmup sounds and not the song lyrics until they have built up some strength. Beginners may also need to stop after the first few songs the first day, adding songs in sequence day by day or week by week as your voice gets stronger.

More experienced singers can use the warmup sounds as they learn the songs, or move directly to singing the lyric. It's also fine to always use the warmup sounds and never sing the lyric if you are solely using the workout as a vocal warmup before singing your own songs. You may also be able to skip the first couple of songs, depending on how your voice feels. Keep in mind that some voices need more warming up in the morning than in the afternoon. If you've had some lessons and know which areas of your voice need the most attention, you can use the songs accordingly. For instance, you could skip the first song, but you might sing "Willow Weep for Me" twice to work your transition area. Until you get a feel for the songs, start from the beginning each time you use the CD, unless you use it more than once a day. In that case, you can start where you've left off. Another exception to this starting from the top rule would be those singers who warm up by singing scales and arpeggios and are using specific songs to work specific technical areas.

Once you have the lyrics and melodies memorized, and you understand the technical focus for each song, you can use Disc 2 and move much faster. On Disc 2 I only 3 announce the title, the warmup sound, and focus for each song. Disc 2 gives you more room for stylizing since it only has chords and no melody to follow. There are stylizing ideas at the end of each chapter, and I demonstrate some examples of different ways to stylize at the end of Disc 2.

Singing the first nine songs of the workout should be enough to warm up your voice for the day. The second half will help you build more strength, volume and vocal dexterity. These later songs are fairly difficult and should be approached carefully. If you feel any vocal strain that isn't relieved by breathing correctly and/or using one of the troubleshooting tricks outlined in the guidebook, either take a break for half an hour, or quit for the day. It's much easier on the voice to work shorter daily sessions as opposed to one long session once a week. Regular daily sessions, even short ones, are also better for building and maintaining vocal strength and good singing habits.

Keep in mind that while the range of these songs should fit a typical soprano/ baritone or alto/bass range, every voice is different. The lowest note in the alto/bass workout is the Eb below middle C, the highest is the D almost two octaves above that. The lowest note in the baritone/soprano workout is an Ab, the highest is the G almost two octaves above that. If a note is too high or low for you to sing comfortably, try the troubleshooting suggestions in the book or find an alternate note. It's never good to force your voice where it doesn't want to go.

Quickstart:

Working With the Book and CDs Concurrently

If you would like to learn more about vocal technique in a systematic way, use the CDs in conjunction with the book. I highly recommend this approach, especially for beginning singers.

Read the section on “Angel From Montgomery” before you listen to the CD. Try all the breathing exercises and postures, then stay aware of your breathing as you learn and sing the first song with the music. Move through the songs in this same manner, reading about each one in the book before learning it with the CD.

Working With the Book and CDs: More Details

I discuss a different vocal topic in each chapter, plus I troubleshoot the hard parts of each song. The sequence of topics follows the same general sequence I use when I’m coaching a singer. You can also just use the book as a reference guide if you have difficulty with a specific song. Read the chapter on that song, or go straight to the troubleshooting paragraph.

Work with the book and CDs as slowly or as quickly as you like. A good pace for a beginner would be to add one song and chapter a week for the first nine songs. The later songs are more advanced, so spend more time with each of them before proceeding. Make sure that you know a song well before trying the expansion ideas.

Many singers find it helpful to have the lyrics in front of them while learning a song. Feel free to write in breath marks and underline problem words.

Contemporary vocal styles occasionally bend the rules of good voice technique. A singer may push his or her chest voice too high, or go for a throatier, hoarser, or overly airy tone. My feeling is that all singers should learn the rules before breaking them. So sing this warmup with care, staying conscious of your body, and never pushing or straining. Then you’ll be thoroughly warmed up in case you plan on bending the rules a bit when you sing your own songs.

Wade in the Water

Focus: Low End Placement

Sound: Le or Me (Ma or La on highs)

Alto/Bass Key: Bm—Abm

Baritone/Soprano Key: Em—Dbm

For some singers, getting control of the low notes is harder than opening up on high notes. The vocal cords relax and vibrate more slowly the lower you sing, and as they relax it's easy to lose control of the note. The note can wobble, dip in pitch, or your tone can become overly breathy. Low notes can also feel like they're stuck in your throat. The key to controlling low notes is placing the resonance into your face and out of your throat. Various resonance spots of your head include the hard palate (the roof of your mouth), the soft palate, the sinus cavity, the mask area around the eyes and nose, and the lips.

It bears repeating that singing in your throat will tire your voice and cause pitch and control problems. You may find that different vowels resonate in different areas of your head. As long as you feel the note somewhere in your hard palate, mouth or mask area, and not in your throat, you'll build and retain control of your lower register.

Warming Up

Certain sounds tend to vibrate more in your face, making facial placement easier. Humming is the buzziest of the sounds, so if you can't get the lower notes of "Wade in the Water" out of your throat:

- Hum them for a week.
- Next, sing all except the second half of the second line on "me" or "le."
- On the second half of the second line (where the high notes are) sing "ma" or "la." This puts open vowels on the high notes and closed vowels on the low ones.

"Ee" is a closed vowel, which means your jaw is almost shut as you sing it. Closed vowels are more facially resonant and easier to control, so they're the best sounds for warming up your low end. Conversely, open vowels like "ah" are easier to sing on high notes. This is helpful to remember if you're a songwriter. Open vowels on the high notes and closed vowels on the low notes will make your songs easier to sing.

- If singing the low notes on "me" or "le" feels out of control, try slightly smiling as you sing those notes. This slightly tightens your tongue, which gently tightens your vocal cords, giving you more control.
- Try to sing with no vibrato on the low notes; this will also help you maintain control.
- When you switch to singing the lyric of "Wade in the Water," the facial resonance will lessen in intensity, but should still be present. If it isn't:
 - > Try alternating from the lyric to "me" until you feel that the lyric is also resonating in your head.
 - > Tilt your head down about an inch, smile, and sing the lyric.

Potential Trouble Spots and Hints

- The refrain of "Wade In The Water" is repeated several times, moving down a halfstep each time to gradually work the lower notes of your range. That means the highest notes occur in

the first refrain. The “wa” of water in the second line has the highest note. Make sure to drop your jaw on it and keep your throat relaxed. Feel free to “scoop” the high note by sliding up to it from the previous note if that feels more relaxed. Scooping can easily be overdone on songs, but as a warmup method it can promote elasticity.

- “Water” in the last line covers the lowest notes. If it feels out of control or wobbly, slightly raise your eyebrows as you inhale through your nose instead of your mouth, keep your brows lifted, and slightly smile as you sing.
- You can also avoid the lowest note by singing only the first of the three notes on the “wa” of “water.”

Expansion Ideas

Gospel songs like this are wonderful for exploring note variations and ornamentations, and there’s definitely room to experiment on “Wade in the Water.” Beginning stylists should start with simple one- or two-note variations on any held note in the song. For instance, sing the first note of the song, go a scale step down, then return, all on “Wade.” This is called a neighboring tone. Neighboring tones can be a scale step above or below the starting note.

More advanced improvisers can explore pentatonic scales, which are the basis for many gospel, pop, and R&B runs. See the glossary for more about pentatonic scales. Also try copying individual runs from other singers and songs and see if they work on “Wade in the Water” or any other songs in the workout.

Check out their versions of “Wade in the Water”: Andrae Crouch • Eva Cassidy

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