

# KARAOKE, NO CHOKEY

*BY CHUCK STEWART*

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# WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

I wrote this book for karaoke singers who want to have more fun and not choke up when the music starts.

If you have ever suffered from stage fright and were full of adrenalin, you know the feeling. “Run away!” It says. This book will touch upon some of the factors having to do with singing in front of people. One thing that can scare away stage fright is preparation. If you have ever had a dog coming at you, growling, snarling, and showing his teeth, you know that feels a lot like stage fright. What you might not know is that the vicious dog is scared, too. If you come at the dog, swinging a baseball bat or a tennis racket, he may back off. He might growl, but his fear increases and overtakes his desire to attack you. If the dog comes at you and you have no weapon, you were probably not prepared to defend yourself from an attack.

If you are better prepared to sing, you are better prepared to avoid embarrassment, shame, and being looked upon as a joke. A few things can help. Some simple exercises and advice can improve your performance and make it more fun for you and for everyone there.

You might not have money or time for voice lessons. You will need some time to practice, though. You also may not have the time to read a 400 page book, so we will get right to this.

So, I wrote this book to save you some money and some time but still be able to improve your game with singing Karaoke. You'll have to participate and put in a little effort to get some benefit.

# WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS BOOK

This book can help you improve your singing some and make singing more in control and also more fun.

Even if you are not yet serious about singing, in this book you'll be able to learn some of the secrets that world class singers already know. You also can learn about some common myths which hold you back if you still believe them to be true.

You could pay as much as \$500 per hour with some top vocal coaches. You could spend thousands of dollars in college or at music conservatories and still come out, not singing well. It happens! Schools are not all the same and even the most expensive vocal coach cannot guarantee you successful and artistic singing.

You are going to find out some simple things to help you sing better. You must practice, however, because knowing them alone probably won't help you much, if at all.

You may have seen this in sports: Two seconds on the clock and a free throw breaks the tie and wins the basketball game. He gets two shots, so it looks like it's in the bag. He has made thousands of these in the past. This is the championship, though. He looks at the basket, sweat dripping off his face as he dribbles the ball a few times. A few more. He shoots. The ball bounces off the rim, not going in. He choked. The crowd lets out a sigh and cheers him on. He dribbles. He shoots. It's all net and he wins the championship for his team.

You don't want to choke. Sometimes you will anyway but you love the game, the game of karaoke. The better you get, the less often you choke. There are no perfect singers but you can always improve if you practice the right way and the right amount of time.

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About The Author

Other Books by Chuck Stewart

# Chapter 1

## WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOUR SINGING?

### RATE YOUR SELF WITH THIS TEST

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being excellent and 1 being poor, rate yourself on the following:

1. INTONATION - Are you on the note, above it or below it?
2. RANGE - Can you get the high notes, the low notes and the ones in between?
3. ENDURANCE - Do you get vocally tired or last for a long time?
4. ARTICULATION- Are your words clear and easy to understand?
5. VOCAL USE versus ABUSE – Do you experience any pain, hoarseness, loss of voice, during or after singing?
6. SING IN KEY - Can you “carry a tune”? Can you sing without switching keys?
7. CONNECTED VOICE - Does your voice “crack” or “break”? Does it sound like you switch gears or hear a drastic sudden change in your sound?
8. BREATHING - Do you know how to breathe?

Without hearing and seeing you, I cannot assess your problems but I can offer some advice on each topic. If you want an evaluation, I do offer those for free at this time. For now, do a little introspection and write down your answers.

## EIGHT FACTORS

1. **INTONATION** - The good news is that you are probably not tone deaf. Studies have found that tone deafness is a result of brain damage. Some people have no musical experience using their voices and have difficulties singing as a result. This is called *atonal*, or, without tone. It doesn't mean they have *no* tone, they just have no sense of tonality. To sing in tune, two things are required: 1) That you hear melodies and can repeat them and 2) That you hear how your voice fits in with an accompaniment. In accompaniment, there are chords and the notes in the chords being played or implied. If you don't naturally hear them, you can do some melodic and harmonic ear training to get better. Pitch matching exercises can help. If you don't have an instrument, you can get an app for your phone or find one online and touch any note and listen to sing the same pitch on a hum or on a vowel sound.
2. **RANGE** - It can take some training to be able to comfortably sing high notes. You should not yell or force them out because that can injure your voice a little or a lot. Quiet humming on notes can help to expand your range as long as you don't go too high or get too loud too soon.
3. **ENDURANCE** - Just like with range, endurance should be built gradually. You can start with 5 minutes and try adding a few more every day. When you can sing for 15 minutes without fatigue and without strain or pain, take a break after 15 minutes for about five minutes and then try extending your time gradually (over a few days) to another 15 minutes. One thing that helps endurance is to be well-hydrated. Don't overdo that, though. Depending on your body size, between 6-10 glasses of water daily may help endurance.

4. **ARTICULATION-** Your words should be easy to understand. Yes, there are some recording artists whose articulation is bad, but it doesn't let you off the hook. Listen for how perfect the diction has to be to work stylistically. If you sing a country song like an opera singer to a room of country fans, expect to be laughed at. The opposite is also true. Do the words some justice. Don't overdo or underdo!
5. **VOCAL USE versus ABUSE** – If you feel pain or strain, **STOP!** You won't get stronger; you will hurt yourself. “No pain, no gain” does **NOT** apply to singing! You want to find out why you have pain if you do. Are you ill? Do you smoke? Are you dehydrated? Have you been yelling any? Have you had voice lessons from a competent vocal coach? (There are some very bad ones around, just so you know) Look at [the vocal coach test](#).
6. **SING IN KEY** – You need to have experience to sing in key because you have to hear and assimilate what you hear, without changing it in your mind or in your voice. There is a word for having a sense of being in a key and that word is *tonality*.
7. **CONNECTED VOICE** – Singing with “one voice” **NOT** two, **NOT** three voices, and singing without cracking or breaking or flipping into a different and possibly breathy sound can take very specialized vocal training. If you have a crack, you will have to sing below it to have a seamless voice until you learn to not crack from a vocal professional. One question to ask a prospective vocal coach would be: *Do you know how to get my voice to stop cracking?*
8. **BREATHING** – Breathing is very natural or you would not be able to read this; you would be dead. You do need to control your breath for singing. You use air to set the vocal folds (formerly called *vocal cords*) into vibration. Breathing exercises are in the next chapter.

# Chapter 2

## What To Do Now

### SET UP A PRACTICE SCHEDULE

If you don't schedule it, you won't do it. There are no guarantees in life, except that if you do nothing you achieve nothing. Schedule your practice.

### “WHATCHA GONNA DO?”

1. Be sure you're well-hydrated.
2. Warm up your voice. Do a phonated Z or a “motor boat” (lips flapping) sound to the song you want to work on. You could do scales or arpeggios but a song can work if you don't get too loud or too high at first. It can take 5, 10 or more minutes to warm up. Every day is different.
3. When you are warmed up, it will feel relaxed and free. Sing your song that you have selected and pay attention to your intonation. If you're not sure, ask a friend (a real friend who will be honest) or find a friend who can hear pitch. If you need to, ask a choral or choir director or someone who sings in one. The first time through your song, you can focus on your pitch.
4. If the song is too high or too loud for your voice, do a different song so that you don't hurt yourself. You may have to lower the key for now. Resting is as important as using your voice, so rest your voice between each attempt for a minute or two.
5. Sing your song again, this time paying attention to your articulation. Is it over-done? Is it under-done? Is it sloppy or inconsistent? Is it in the correct style for the song? Others' ears can help with this, too.

6. Do you feel any pain in your throat? If you do, stop! You are either too loud or your range isn't developed enough to do that song in that key.
7. Singing in key or "carrying a tune" may be helped by singing without any music. It's called *a cappella* but it means with no accompaniment. Literally it means in the style of a chapel. Most chapels have no instruments in them, evidently.
8. Is your voice cracking? If your larynx remains stable (not moving up or down) and if your vocal folds are strong enough to not suddenly pop open, your voice won't crack. It takes one-on-one instruction with someone who knows the proper exercises to give to you at the proper time in your vocal development to handle cracking. For almost everyone, there is no short cut to this. It does take training. You can do all sorts of things to manipulate your voice, trying to sing around the break, singing more softly or more breathy, but those are just coping measures and not something that most professionals would ever do.

## **BREATHING EXERCISE #1-**

Inhale for 5 seconds through your nose.

Exhale for 5 seconds through your nose. Don't hold your breath between exercises. Breathe normally a few times and increase the time by a second or two. Do these 3 or 4 times a day and keep increasing the seconds on "each side" of the breath—the inhalation and the exhalation. If you hit 30 seconds in and 30 seconds out, you are doing great. Give yourself a month or more to get there and don't hyperventilate or pass out.

# **Chapter 3**

## **How To Warm Up Fast**

Start low in your voice (not in the very bottom) and hold out a note with the Z or the motor boat flapping lips sound and slide up and down in pitch, sort of like an American siren from the 60s. You can do this for five to ten minutes and also switch over to some songs, making the same. When you're in a pitch and all of a sudden must sing, this can be a voice saver.

# Chapter 4

## Myths And Bad Advice

### **“SING FROM YOUR DIAPHRAGM.”**

Nobody sings from the diaphragm. Ask any competent doctor. The diaphragm is your **inhale** muscle. You cannot feel it or its movements. Don't take my word for it. I had to research it for myself. Any doctor who hasn't forgotten his/her med school education knows this.

### **“DON'T SING FROM YOUR THROAT.”**

Your vocal folds are in your throat. How are you going to sing without using them? A person might mean for you to sing with a bigger fuller sound, but sound comes from your throat regardless. If someone criticizes you for singing from your throat, that person could be your worst possible choice for a vocal coach. Everyone is different from everyone else as far as the precise size and shape of the pharynx and resonating cavities in the head. Otherwise, we'd all sound the same and we don't. Some teachers want you to sound like someone they like and when you don't match that other person, they try to shape you into that person.

### **“INHALE IN YOUR ABDOMEN.”**

Your lungs terminate approximately at the bottom of your rib cage, but they do not extend past your diaphragm and into the abdominal cavity. Find an anatomy book or ask a doctor about this. If you think you are inhaling into your abdomen, get this clarified for yourself. “Inhale down here, not up here,” is another thing a teacher may say, pointing to the abdomen and then to the chest. If you want to distend you abdomen,

walk around with a pot belly or look pregnant, follow that useless advice.

## **"DON'T LET YOUR CHEST MOVE, WHEN YOU INHALE."**

Again, find an anatomy book or ask your favorite doctor where your lungs are located. Why? When you fully inflate your lungs, your chest will expand. If you need the amount of air that is in a full breath, you have to allow your chest to expand as the lungs inflate. Take in enough air to comfortably execute the phrase before the next breath is needed. Depending on the loudness of the phrase and the length of it, you'll find that the amount of air needed varies. As you practice, you can learn to gauge how much you need.

Breathing is a very natural thing. The more you change it, the harder it can be. Use some common sense and make sure that the people who give you advice know what they are talking about. Just because something is said a lot doesn't make it true. People thought the world was flat at one time and literally killed some of the ones who did not agree.

# Chapter 5

## HOW TO PRACTICE A SONG

### GET YOUR STUFF TOGETHER

Have your music ready before you start so that you can get things done more efficiently. To accomplish this, you may need some amplification and a source for music or a karaoke machine. You also would be wise to print out your lyrics, double-spaced. That gives you room to make some written notes on the lyrics sheet(s). The idea is to be set up and get to work instead of starting and stopping because you weren't ready in the first place.

### SING YOUR SONG WITH A PEN OR PENCIL IN HAND

Make notes or marks as you go so that you can isolate the areas which need improvement.

### RECORD YOURSELF IF YOU CAN

Record yourself on your phone or on more professional equipment if you have it. If you don't, there's another solution.

If you have no way to get yourself recorded, there is something else you can do. Sing while facing a wall and place a magazine or book behind each ear. The sound will reflect back and you will hear yourself more like how others hear you. It will be mixed with the sound in your head, but you will get a new perspective of your voice, nevertheless.

How we hear ourselves in our own heads is quite different from how others hear us. If you're not used to hearing yourself as others hear you, you may be startled, disappointed,

or even impressed or thrilled when you hear your voice recorded for the first time.

## **PRACTICE PROCEDURE**

Sing your song through once, noting parts which need to be better.

To be most efficient, work on the “problem parts”. You might need to do them several times and even refer back to the original singer of the song on a recording or on YouTube.

Work the problem parts to improve, NOT to perfect. That comes later. Improvement leads to being good enough for what you are doing whether it is karaoke, a concert, a recording or whatever. It takes time and work.

When you've improved a section, sing that part within the context of the song. Don't be surprised if old habits sabotage the first effort. Just do it again.

“Persistence is the mother of skill” - Tony Robbins

# Chapter 6

## Advice for your vocal health

### 1. Get proper rest.

Your voice apparatus is part of your body. If your body is tired, your voice will be tired. Don't expect your voice to be at its best if you are tired.

### 2. Learn how your voice works.

You should be able to sing without cracking, sing in tune, sing stylistically appropriate and should be able to sing without feeling pain, being vocally tired, and you should know how to warm up and when to take breaks to safeguard your voice. Some singing teachers can help with this and some can not.

### 3. How about a vocal coach?

Vocal coaches are all over the map with what they know and what they charge. The vocal coaches who have worked with famous performers did not necessarily turn them into singers. Most came for help with specific problems with singing. The majority seem to have had the same issues with endurance, vocal abuse, or worse. When you make your living with your voice, you want someone who knows what they are doing so that you can continue your career. If you want, you can interview a vocal coach and ask him or her questions found on my site. It is "[Test for a vocal coach](#)". Read the test before recommending someone take it.

### 4. Stay well-hydrated.

If you haven't had enough water, your voice may feel scratchy or dry. The water doesn't touch your vocal folds. It goes into your stomach and doesn't reach your voice directly, It must be absorbed and then arrives via the bloodstream. Not enough water causes the lubricating efficiency of the mucus.

## **5. ALWAYS warm up!**

Runners and dancers stretch. Why? To avoid injury, they stretch. Singers warm up. Musicians warm up. It's the physical side of getting ready. If you don't, you will potentially hurt yourself. Professionals warm up, so you should do the best for yourself and warm up!

## **6. Study?**

You have that option. Do yourself a favor, though. Don't waste your time and money with things and people which lead nowhere. You would be better off practicing on your own than on taking the advice of someone who never took the time to be responsible enough to study with true professionals and to read sources from true authorities. Stay away from people who cannot explain what they mean. They may or may not be strictly money-motivated; but what does that matter if you pay for something and get nothing in return for it, or far worse, if you wind up injured by following their advice.



## **ABOUT CHUCK STEWART**

Chuck Stewart is an American: singer/songwriter/vocal coach/musician/composer/arranger/architect/builder, to name a few activities past and present.

He currently lives in Europe enjoying the culture, architecture, and music of civilization older than that of the United States. Formerly living in West Virginia, Nevada, and Florida and having traveled to Europe 11 times, he now believes the experiences of different cultures can be an eye opening and mind opening thing.

Drawing from decades of public performance as a professional musician and singer, he has spent enough time on stage to have discovered things unknown to non-performers or neophytes.

Chuck had terrible stage fright when he started performing at age 15. No one helped him with it and the advice people gave was ridiculous. Some people said to picture people in their underwear. Would it make a person comfortable to be on stage, facing an audience in their underwear? Don't think so. Who came up with that crap?!

LEARN MORE ABOUT CHUCK'S COACHING [click here.](#)