

Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing is essential to healthy vocal technique. As your diaphragm contracts the lungs expand, creating a vacuum that pulls air into the lungs. Keeping the diaphragm in a stable position as you exhale ensures a minimal amount of breath is used, a key factor in breath control and good technique as a whole. Stomach muscles are extremely important in controlling the diaphragm so ensure you emphasise this to your students.

When breathing from the diaphragm keep good posture, shoulders comfortably dropped and rolled back and chin parallel to the floor. There should be little movement from the chest and an expansion of the stomach.

Breathing Exercises

Breathe normal and ignore your breathing to begin with. Place hand on or just above belly button and focus on pushing your stomach out (expanding) and then releasing it back to it's resting position. Use your stomach muscles to do this. Once you feel comfortable with this motion start inhaling as you expand your stomach and then exhaling as you release the stomach back to it's resting place. Repeat and ensure shoulders are dropped and chest has minimal movement.

Lay on the floor with a light book/flyer etc on your belly button
Breathe in and raise the book as high as you can using your stomach muscles but ensuring your back stays flat on the floor
Hold at the top
Slowly exhale and lower your stomach (and the book)

Hands on stomach and slightly lean forward
Exhale every last drop of air
Hold for a moment
Relax and breathe in
Hold for a moment then repeat
The stomach should naturally go in when exhaling and out when inhaling.
You do want to push your body a little more than normal with this exercise in order to see the natural reaction however be careful and stay comfortable

If your stomach isn't moving but your chest is, exhale and start again, this time focusing on keeping your chest still as you inhale.

Hands on your ribs and imagine filling a balloon inside your stomach as you inhale for 5, hold for 5, out for 5 feeling ribs expand and contract

Repeat with 6, 7 & 8

Also try 4 short 'sh' followed by a full exhale on 'sh' to feel the diaphragm engaging