

Vocal Techniques

Although PPC is a choir club, the captain does not need to have formal music training in order to effectively teach the children. Each music lesson is explained in simple terms, and the captain may even learn along with the children, if necessary. Use the following techniques along with the music lessons to train yourself as well as your choir.

Incorporate one or two of these concepts into every rehearsal time to help your sailors learn to sing correctly. Praise the children who accomplish these techniques.

1. It often helps the singer to imagine that there is a big balloon positioned in the middle of the body, just above the belt line. Every time the singer breathes in, this balloon expands. When the singer breathes out, the balloon shrinks. While the balloon gets bigger and smaller as the singer breathes, the chest and shoulders should remain still. Practice breathing with your hand on your stomach to check your progress.
2. The singer's body should be relaxed but controlled at all times. His shoulders should be rolled back and down, and his upper chest should always feel expanded. While standing, practice this relaxed position. Roll shoulders back and breathe correctly.
3. To prevent nervous fidgeting while singing, the singer should hold his arms down at his sides and keep his thumbs against the side seams of his pants (or skirt for girls). He should not sway or move his feet around. Practice this stance while rehearsing. Praise children who stand still. Encourage fidgety sailors to become aware of nervous movements and then correct them.
4. The singer should sing in a light, floating tone. Discourage the children from "pushing" their voices to sing loudly. Soft, light singing blends well and can even produce more volume than straining voices. A relaxed, floating voice can reach higher notes than a "pushed" voice. Sing up and down scales (la, la, la) with the children, practicing a light, floating tone. Praise children who accomplish it well, and work with children who need extra help. Use this exercise to warm up the children's voices before each rehearsal.
5. Encourage crisp consonants and round, tall vowels. Practice reading the words of the song along with the rhythm of the song. Work until the children voice the sounds simultaneously, with no "lagers" and no "jump-the-gunners." When singing, encourage the children to hold a pure, open vowel on held notes until the very end of the note value. Instead of singing "yes-s-s," the children should sing "yeh-eh-ehs." Practice problem words in the song the children are learning.

FIVE-STEP SINGER'S CODE

Singing is energizing! If you make the sailors pay attention, they will stay alert. Before each rehearsal the captain should remind the sailors and make sure they follow the Five-Step Singer's Code. The sailors should know these following steps by heart:

1. Keep both feet on the floor.
2. Keep the back straight and away from the chair.
3. Keep the chin level with the floor.
4. Keep the bottom half of the eyes on the music and the top half of the eyes on the director's face! (If the song is memorized, look only at the director's face.)
5. Always smile with the eyes while singing!