

The Key To:

A Good Singing Voice





When we were developing our [singing-in-tune method](#)¹, we asked people about their experience with singing. One of the questions we asked was *"What has held you back from singing in the past?"*

Although there were many interesting answers, one which kept coming up was:

"I don't have a good voice"

Also known as:

"People tell me my voice sucks"

"I'm not really a good singer"

"My voice doesn't sound good"

If you don't think you have a good voice you'll be reluctant to sing. That's understandable. Especially when it comes to singing in front of other people!

But what does it mean to have a "good voice"?

And what can you do if you don't have a good voice but want to sing?

What makes a voice "good"?

We all instinctively know a good voice from a bad one. You have probably heard amateur singers and thought "wow, they really can't sing!" But what is it we're reacting to?

More importantly, what could that person change about their singing to sound good?

Let's look at the 16 keys to having a good singing voice!

¹ <https://www.musical-u.com/learn-to-sing-in-tune/>

1. Being in Control

Certainly one of the most noticeable factors in whether someone seems like a good singer or not: are they in control of their voice?

Having good **vocal control** means staying "on pitch". This means singing the pitch of notes accurately, rather than a bit sharp or flat. It also means not wandering off key or singing in the wrong key to begin with.

Singers with good vocal control can sing each note distinctly for the intended musical effect in a melody or harmony. They can also handle note leaps accurately, not jumping too far or not far enough in pitch.

Singers with a good voice have strong vocal control.

2. Good Tone

Singing tone² is a combination of a few different factors, but it basically means "the overall sound of the voice".

It's almost always the vowels in words which are sustained in lyrics (i.e. "ah", "oh" "ee" etc. rather than "ch" "ss" "th" etc.) and singers with good tone use clear consistent vowel sounds.

Tone also means the overall *timbre* (characteristic sound) of the voice. For example, is it hoarse or smooth, hard or soft, broad or narrow, light or heavy, and so on.

Singers with a good voice have good vocal tone.

²<https://www.musical-u.com/learn/how-to-achieve-excellent-tone-balance-and-blend-in-your-choir/>

3. Clear Enunciation

It doesn't matter if you're hitting all the right notes if every word is mumbled. Good singers have clear **enunciation**, crafting each syllable precisely as intended.

Of course in rock and pop music the delivery of lyrics is much more relaxed and you might not sing crisp syllables. Still, each word should be expressed exactly as the singer intends.

Singers with a good voice clearly enunciate each word they sing.

4. Strong Support

One thing which can mark out a bad singer is that their voice seems weak or feeble. To sound like a good singer you must have solid **vocal support** for your singing. This lets you produce good clear notes which sound strong and don't waver.

It also helps you to produce a broad tone rather than one which sounds thin and feeble. Although you might occasionally want to sing with a weak-sounding voice to suit a particular song, a good singer must have a voice which is capable of producing a strong broad tone.

[Vocal support](#)³ comes from a combination of good posture, proper breathing technique, and overall practice and development of your singing voice.

Singers with a good voice have strong support for their singing.

³<http://www.singwise.com/cgi-bin/main.pl?section=articles&doc=EffectiveAndProperBreathingForSinging>

5. Suitable Volume

This is another immediate tell-tale sign of a poor singer: they are either blasting out every note, or singing so quietly you can barely hear them. The listener is either deafened or frustrated by straining to hear. Either way, sing at a **suitable volume** or they won't want to hear more!



Singing at an appropriate volume is essential for sounding like a good singer. The volume must suit the music, varying appropriately with the musical phrasing, and be at the right overall level to match the other musicians and please your audience.

Singers with a good voice sing at the right volume.

6. Suits the Style

The world of music is wonderfully diverse, and although we are all naturally gifted with a singing voice, these voices vary and they must vary to **suit the style of music** being sung.

Have you ever heard someone at a karaoke night try to sing death metal with a sweet and gentle voice? Or someone attempt to deliver a love ballad with a hoarse growling roar? Once you've stopped laughing, the chances are you don't come away thinking they're a good singer...

Good singers know how to adjust their tone, volume and overall expression to suit the style of music. They also know to avoid genres which they aren't (yet) practised in singing!



To put it another way: a good opera voice is not the same as a good rock voice or a good R&B voice.

Singers with a good voice sing in a style which suits the song.

7. Consistency

With all the characteristics above, it's important to sing with **consistency**. If you sound good for a few notes but then terrible after that, the overall impression will be a bad one.

You've probably seen this before: the singer who shyly mumbles their way through a verse, and then reaches the chorus and sings a strong, powerful, accurate performance, before returning to their mumbling for the next verse....

Having a good voice means having a good voice throughout a song, not just now and then. It means having consistent volume, tone, pitching, support, and style at all times.

Singers with a good voice sing consistently well.

8. Musical Phrasing

The human voice is perhaps the most expressive of all instruments - but it can also be the most boring! Good **musical phrasing** is essential for a compelling performance.

Phrasing means how the singer "shapes" each line of the song. It's a combination of pitch, volume, tone, enunciation and more. Consistency is the foundation for a good performance but it phrasing which makes the singer sound like a person rather than a robot!

Singers with a good voice use expressive musical phrasing.

9. Versatility



A good singer doesn't just have one genre they stick to rigidly. In fact, one impressive characteristic of good singers is that they are **versatile** and can actually adapt their voice to suit any style of music.

New techniques and practice may be required, and a good singer will know to avoid public performance until they have learned to adjust. But with a good voice they can try new things without fear that their voice simply isn't up to the task.

Singers with a good voice can confidently try new things.

10. Self-awareness

This is actually the key to most of the points above, and it's another factor which is particularly noticeable when distinguishing good singers from bad: **self-awareness**, i.e. being aware of your voice as you sing.

When someone calls someone else a bad singer, it's normally because they've seen them blasting out notes, seemingly oblivious to whether they're in tune, or at the right volume, or singing with a nice tone.

Singers with a good voice are always aware of their voice.

11. Use Your Ears

Key to several of the points above: you must **listen!** Good singers are using their ears as much as their voice.

As a singer your ears let you:

- Hear and check your own pitch
- Adjust your tone as you sing
- Make sure your volume is in balance with the music
- Hear your band or fellow singers and complement them musically
- Develop your overall [musicality](#)⁴ and musical awareness

To accomplish all this requires ear training and [active listening](#)⁵ while singing.

Singers with a good voice rely on their ears.

12. Know your range

This is another "know thyself" tip: even the greatest singers in the world can't sing every note. It's important to know your own **vocal range** and stay within it. In fact, it's often a tell-tale sign of an amateur singer that they reach for notes that are beyond their range. This results in missed notes and awkward strained sounds, and can even damage the vocal cords making it harder to sing notes which *are* in range!

Singers with a good voice stick to singing notes in their range.

13. Breathing

As any singing teacher will tell you, **breathing** is absolutely essential for good singing. Singers with a good voice know the importance of good breathing, and their singing depends on it.

Without the solid foundation which proper breathing provides, even the most naturally talented singer will fall flat mid-performance.

⁴ <https://www.musical-u.com/blog/what-is-musicality/>

⁵ <https://www.musical-u.com/learn/topic/how-to/active-listening/>

Singers with a good voice know how to breathe properly.



14. Make It Seem Easy

Except in rare cases where the song demands it, people want to hear a singer who **makes it sound easy**. Like the words and notes are flowing out from them without effort in a natural way. This helps the listener feel relaxed.

If it feels like the singer is straining or trying too hard for each note, it's hard for the listeners to really enjoy the performance, as they instinctively start feeling tense themselves.

As well as the effect on the audience, being tense when singing is a big problem. Tension in your chest, jaw or vocal cords will make it much harder to breathe, pitch and support notes properly. Although it

can be hard when you're just starting out, the best thing you can do for your voice is: relax!

Singers with a good voice make it seem easy.

15. Love Your Voice

It may seem a bit "chicken and egg", but singers with a good voice know that they have a good voice and **they love it**. They have made peace with the fact that it sounds a bit different to other people than to themselves and they've practiced enough to be comfortable singing in front of people.

Singers with a good voice aren't afraid to hear themselves on a recording. [We all sound funny to ourselves](#)⁶ at first, but to be a good singer and be confident in your voice you need to get past that. Recording yourself is a powerful way to improve your own technique and improve your voice. The more you practice the more self-aware you'll become in the moment as you sing.

Singers with a good voice love their voice.



⁶ <http://gizmodo.com/why-does-your-voice-sound-different-when-its-recorded-1282432911>

16. Look after your voice

This is a hard one to manage until you've accomplished the step above, learning to love your own voice. But it's vital! The singing voice is a natural biological part of your body, and that means it's vulnerable to damage if treated badly.

If you want to have a good voice, you need to make sure you **take care of it**⁷. That means warming up before singing difficult passages, learning proper breathing support, taking it easy when you have a sore throat, and avoiding straining your voice trying to reach notes beyond your range.

Singers with a good voice *keep it good by looking after it.*

How to get a good singing voice

As you read the list above you might have wondered whether these keys were the *cause* of having a good voice, or the *effect*. Does having a good voice produce these characteristics, or does building these characteristics lead to a good voice?

Do you have to be born with a good voice or can you create a good voice by training each of the points above?

As with most things in music, it's a bit of nature and a bit of nurture. Some people will naturally have a better singing voice to begin with, but everyone is capable of developing one. As you read the points above, no doubt you found yourself thinking "*Oh, I could improve on that one...!*"

⁷ <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/voice/pages/takingcare.aspx>



Or perhaps you're not sure how exactly to improve your voice? Ask a friend to listen to you singing with this list in hand - then ask them which points you could improve on.

Ultimately a "good voice" is simply one which people enjoy listening to and want to hear more of. The way to develop a good singing voice yourself is to practice each of the points above, improving your voice more and more - until the audience is clamoring for an encore!