

THE VOICE BOX

Health Tips for Sweet Adelines

By Dr. Rachael Gates, *Singing Health Specialist*

My voice gets so tired when I'm trying to memorize music. What should I do?

Singing a song over and over is not the most efficient or effective way to memorize a piece of music — it may help stick the song in your muscle memory, but if the voice is tired, your muscle memory could be memorizing bad habits that often accompany tired vocal production as well. You want to sing songs when your voice is fresh and strong.

Memorizing can be very quick when varied approaches are applied to learning a given piece:

- If a recording is available, listen to it once to grasp the general style and tradition of the piece.
- Write the text on a piece of paper. Look for patterns —such as repetitive lines— and break it up into sections.
- Learn the music of the song and put with the text. Study the musical expression of the text. Pay attention to what the dynamics, melody, harmonies and accompaniment are doing when you sing the text. Is it mirroring the feelings expressed?
- Speak the text as though it's a story or monologue. Decide to whom you're talking and experiment to discover new ways of expressing the text. Continue this process as you go on to the next approach.
- Choosing a section of the text, stick the paper in your pocket and take a walk, going over that section and referring to the paper as needed. Speak it, sing it under your breath or just lip-sync it. Do this during mundane tasks such as showering, washing dishes and riding in the car. Avoid constantly building off the beginning to avoid an over-learned beginning and a less polished ending.
- Write the text out again and again from memory, referring to the paper in your pocket as needed.
- Give the paper to someone else and have her test your memorization.
- Now sing it with good technique and all the nuances, emotions and colors you found throughout the memorization process.

I promise your performance will be more unique and expressive. And if you forget a word, though it will be less likely, your brain will have many ways of recalling it.



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