

How to Give a PVI

1. **First, do no harm!!**

A person's voice is very personal and vulnerable. When you make assessments or corrections, it can be perceived as criticizing the very heart of a person. Be patient, be respectful, be encouraging.

2. **Keep it short**

Best timing is 30 minutes. You can do 15-20 minutes, but 30 gives you time to evaluate, teach a concept, and have the person demonstrate that they understand and can replicate what you want.

3. **Find out what THEY want**

You may have a lot of talent in teaching vocal production, but what you have to teach may not be what your singer needs to learn!

Be flexible, have a lot of tools at your ready disposal, and develop your plan as you listen and assess what the singer needs.

Determine if they are a visual, auditory or kinesthetic learner... you can approach examples and work from that viewpoint.

4. **Less is more**

Only give 1-2 key concepts to work on. You won't be able to teach everything you know in 30 minutes, and your singer won't be able to comprehend or retain it all!

5. **Give them homework**

Always give your singer 1-2 techniques to work on when they leave. If you have time, you can develop a form to memorialize your session (sample attached). If you are doing ongoing work with this person, a record of what you give them will be helpful in tracking progress.

6. **Be realistic**

Your singer won't turn into an opera star overnight. Be honest and upfront about the type of work it takes to effect change. Match the work to the singer's skill level.

We all have different strengths and abilities in what we know and can teach. Even if you are presented with a singer who "can't use" your expertise, you still have something to offer!

Suggested Structure of a PVI Session

1. Setup

- Find a comfortable location with enough room to walk around the singer
- Set a timer on your phone
- Have a keyboard or any other tools handy
- Have pen and paper, or your comment forms ready

2. Interview

- 2-3 minutes max
- Ask what they feel they need to work on
- Are there problem areas to focus on?

3. Assessment

- As you're talking, do a visual assessment of their posture, confidence
- Ask them to sing something (part of a chorus song, a nursery rhyme, a scale)
- View them from different angles as they sing (walk around them)
- Evaluate any obvious problems with posture, breathing, muscle tension

4. Checklist

- Singer's Stance
- Breathing and Support
- Tone Production, Quality, Resonance, Ring
- Vocal and Body Freedom
- Obvious Vocal Breaks

5. Exercises

- Get the singer in touch with their breathing pattern, how to breathe low in the belly
- Where does their support generate? Use big muscles lower in the body
- Singing with full-voiced presence – move their sound "around the body," different visual representations of the sound
- Depending on the area of focus, start with descending scales/intervals
- If there's a break issue, add some sliding exercises through the passaggio

6. Tools

- Keyboard, if you want to play scales or intervals
- Rubber bands to show body engagement/support in the sound
- Solo cup to find ring spot
- Short songs or verses to use for exercises (Danny Boy, I Could've Danced All Night, Hey Jude, Fish Gotta Swim, etc.)

7. Homework

- Give one breathing exercise
- Give 2-3 scale/interval exercises
- Give some mental work – either positive affirmation or some intentional notice of what they're doing as they sing throughout the week

Sample PVI Comment Sheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

PVI Instructor: Beth Smith, bethsings10r@yahoo.com

6/17

POSTURE	
Relaxed and stable (not stiff); shoulders relaxed, knees flexible	<i>Not "holding yourself in space" – able to move or restate easily</i>
Jaw relaxed, no neck tension, throat open, head squarely on neck (not thrust forward)	<i>May want to use a mirror to demonstrate to someone who does this!</i>
BREATHING	
Breath originating from the abdominal area, not the chest	<i>Help the person determine their preferred breathing system... there's no one right answer! It's individual to each person!</i> <i>Show them how to breathe with the whole "air bag"</i>
Support is low in the instrument (from the pelvic area), and includes the abdominal muscles	<i>Hug the tree, hold the barrel up with your air, rubber band, etc.</i>
TONE	
Sound freely produced throughout the range, no discernable break	<i>Sing in the Solo cup, cup your hand behind your ear, etc.</i> <i>Breaks: Sliding exercises work best ... first descending, then ascending</i>
No tension moving outside the "comfort range" (high or low)	<i>Bubble or hum if there's tension apparent</i>
Tongue is relaxed in mouth, not obstructing air or sound	<i>Is it relaxed and low in the mouth, or is there tension (along the sides or in the middle) or a raised position?</i>
OTHER	

Turn over for notes on specific work areas or exercises to address these issues →

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