



# Grass Valley Male Voice Choir

Post Office Box 1698 • Grass Valley, CA 95945

[www.GVMaleVoiceChoir.org](http://www.GVMaleVoiceChoir.org)

## Fundamentals of Singing

This guide introduces the foundational techniques that support healthy, confident, and consistent singing. These fundamentals apply to all styles of music and help singers produce a stronger, more unified choral sound.

The focus is on three essential areas:

- Posture
- Breathing
- Diction

Mastering these basics will improve tone, stamina, and clarity—and make rehearsals and performances more enjoyable for everyone.

### 1. Proper Posture

Posture is the first thing people notice when you sing—and it directly affects tone and breath.

Good singing posture:

- Stand tall with your feet flat on the floor
- Keep your shoulders relaxed and your chest comfortably lifted
- Let your arms rest naturally at your sides
- Align your head comfortably over your shoulders

A simple way to find good posture:

- Stretch tall, reaching your arms overhead
- Slowly lower your arms while keeping your chest open and your back aligned

This balanced, relaxed stance allows the breath to move freely and supports a healthy sound.



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## 2. Breathing

Effective singing depends on proper breathing, which works hand-in-hand with posture.

Breathing from the Diaphragm

- Singing breath comes from the diaphragm, a muscle located below the lungs.
- Proper breathing allows air to move freely through the torso, chest, neck, and mouth.
- Powerful, sustained singing requires diaphragmatic breath support.

How to Practice Diaphragmatic Breathing

1. Inhale slowly without lifting your chest.
2. Allow your abdomen to move outward as you breathe in.
3. As you exhale, gently allow the abdomen to move inward.
4. Practice this slowly until it feels natural.

Try singing simple syllables (such as *la, ga, ba*) while maintaining this relaxed, supported breath.

## 3. Diction (Articulation & Pronunciation)

Clear diction is essential for effective communication and a unified choral sound.

Why Diction Matters

- Audiences need to understand the text
- Clear diction improves ensemble clarity and rhythm
- Strong consonants and unified vowels improve blend

Tips for Clear Diction

- **Slow down**—clarity disappears when we rush
- Make sure the **first and last consonants** of words are audible
- Practice speaking the text clearly before singing it

Good diction allows the message of the music to come through without strain or exaggeration.



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## 4. Using Healthy Vocal Technique

Healthy technique supports range, endurance, and consistency.

### Breath Management

- Inhalation is natural and relaxed—not forced
- Breath is managed through release and support, not control
- Singers benefit from borrowing ideas from instrumental breathing (such as brass players)

Helpful imagery:

- “Hot mashed potato breath” (cooling hot food)
- “Filling a glass” from bottom to top

### Building Strength and Stamina

- Sustain notes evenly while maintaining consistent tone
- Practice gentle crescendos and decrescendos
- Focus on resonance, not volume

## 5. Starting Rehearsals Strong

Well-planned warm-ups prepare both the voice and the ear.

- Warm-ups should engage range, tone, and listening skills
- Early focus helps establish consistent ensemble sound

## 6. Ear Training & Vowel Unity

Unified vowels and accurate intervals are key to choral blend.

Helpful exercises include:

- Descending solfège scales to unify vowels
- Ascending solfège scales to improve pitch accuracy
- Matching vowels across sections
- Adjusting vowel shape for higher and lower ranges

Avoid pressing or forcing the sound—clarity comes from balance and alignment.



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## 7. Rhythm & Consonant Precision

Rhythmic clarity strengthens ensemble precision.

- Count difficult passages
- Speak text rhythmically before singing
- Coordinate consonant releases together
- Use vowel matching and modification for consistency across registers

### How This Connects to Rehearsal

These fundamentals provide a shared foundation that supports the work we do together in rehearsal.

When singers arrive with an understanding of posture, breathing, diction, and healthy vocal technique:

- Rehearsal time can focus on musical expression rather than basic mechanics
- Ensemble blend and balance improve more quickly
- Instructions from the conductor can be applied more efficiently
- The choir develops a more unified and consistent sound

These principles are not meant to replace rehearsal instruction or individual guidance. Instead, they help create a common vocabulary and physical awareness so that rehearsal time can be used productively and musically.

By practicing and applying these fundamentals, each singer contributes to a stronger rehearsal experience—and a more confident, cohesive performance.

## Final Thought

Strong choral singing is built on simple, consistent fundamentals. Attention to posture, breath, diction, and healthy technique allows each singer—and the ensemble as a whole—to perform with confidence, clarity, and musical integrity.

This guide provides a foundation that supports the rehearsal process and complements the musical direction provided by the Artistic Director.