

10-minute Sight-Singing: Lesson 1

What is sight-singing? Basically, it's looking at music notation on the printed page, and producing with your voice a representation of that music. It's taking the visual and transferring it to the aural. As such, we need to be familiar with both the visual and aural aspects of it.

We'll begin by focusing on the sounds. The major scale is made up of 7 distinct notes (note 8 is the same as note 1, only an octave higher). They can be repeated in different octaves as you go higher or lower. Note #1 of the scale is almost always the note that a song ends on, as it conveys a sense of rest and stability. It is also the note that is commonly sounded on a pitch-pipe at the beginning of an *a cappella* song. Let's begin by learning how the notes sound.

Note #1 is separated from the note just below it, note #7, by only a half-step, the smallest interval that we commonly use. Practice singing “seven – one” to different notes as they're given on the pitch-pipe.

Notes #1, 2, and 3 are separated by the interval of a whole step, twice as far as a half-step. You can think of these notes by thinking of the first phrase of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”. That would be the notes: 1, 1, 1, 2, 3. You can hear them in reverse by thinking of the notes to “Three Blind Mice” (3, 2, 1). Practice by listening to the pitch-pipe for note #1, and then singing: 1, 2, 3 or 3, 2, 1. Finally, when you're comfortable with that, practice jumping around at random between notes: 7, 1, 2, 3. Do this with several different examples of note #1.

Now, sing this sequence in a steady rhythm, after hearing the pitch-pipe:

1 7 1 2 3 1 2 7 1 3 7 2 1 7 3 2 7 1

Repeat it again with a different note as note #1.

Now try it in reverse:

1 7 2 3 7 1 2 7 3 1 7 2 1 3 2 1 7 1

