

Vocal Technique Lesson with Romain – Handout Friday 22 May 2020

Your vocal range

What does 'vocal range' mean?

Vocal range means how low and how high people can sing.

Men and ladies are usually divided in three categories, which you may have heard of. The men with the lowest voices are called 'bass', while those with the highest voices are 'tenors' (or 'countertenor', even higher than tenors), and those with a range in-between bass and tenors are called 'baritones'.

For women, we call 'altos' (or 'counteraltos') the ones with the lowest voices, 'sopranos', the ones with the highest voices, and 'mezzo-sopranos' those with a more medium range.

How big should my vocal range be?

There are as many answers as people on Earth, so it is hard to say what a normal vocal range is.

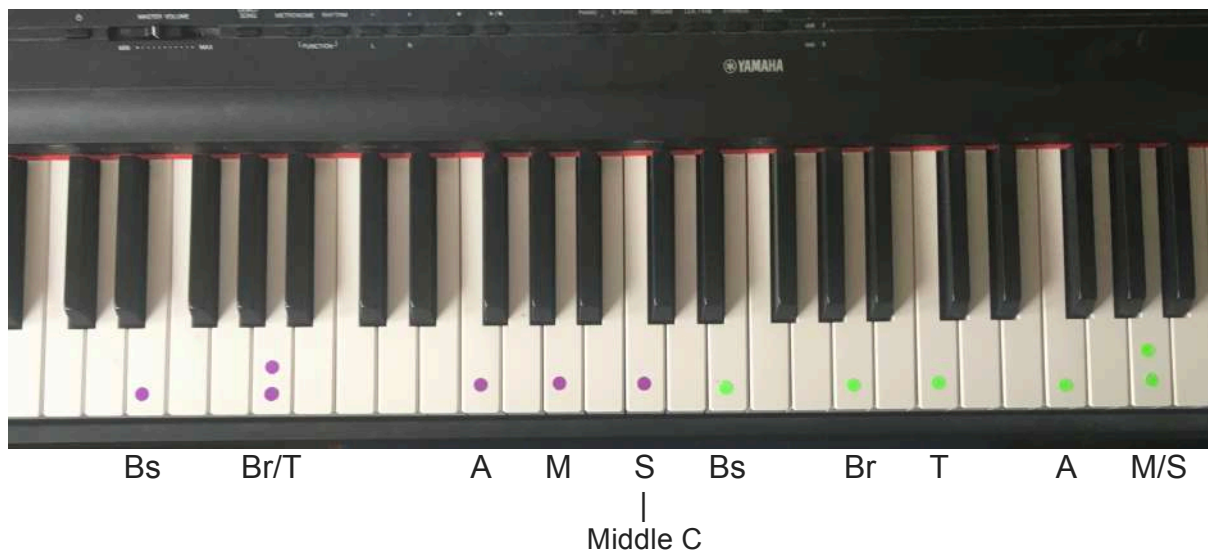
But the average range is probably two octaves.

Average means that some people's range may be just below two octaves, while other people's range can go up to 4 octaves or 5 like Mariah Carey.

There is no right or wrong range.

What is for sure is that you can definitely increase it a bit with regular practise.

What is my vocal range?



Males voices

Bs: Bass

Br: Bariton

T: Tenor

Female voices

A: Alto

M: Mezzo-soprano

S: Soprano

If you have access to a keyboard, use it as it will help you understand.

If you haven't got access to one, you can still understand things by looking at the picture above and reading below.

On this picture, you can see 12 stickers marking the average vocal range for Bases, Baritones, Tenors, Altos, Mezzo-Sopranos and Sopranos.

The 6 purple stickers show the average bottom note for all these different voices.

Men:

If the lowest note you can sing is closer to the first purple sticker, you are a bass. If it is closer to the second and third purple sticker, you are a baritone or a tenor. What will define your voice between baritone and tenor then is your top note.

Women:

If your lowest note is closer to the fourth sticker, you are an alto. If it is closer to the fifth sticker, you are a mezzo-soprano. Closer to the sixth one means you are a soprano.

This is 'average', your lowest note doesn't need to be where the stickers are, it can be up to a couple of tones above or below.

Now have a look at the green stickers. They show you the average top note for all the different voices.

Men:

If the highest note you can sing is closer to the first green sticker, you are a bass. If it is closer to the second sticker, you are a baritone. Closer to the third sticker means you are a tenor.

Women:

If your highest note is closer to the fourth sticker, you are an alto. If it is closer to the fifth or sixth sticker, you are either a mezzo-soprano or a soprano. What defines your voice between mezzo-soprano and soprano then is your lowest note.

Lowest note of your range

Sing the lowest note you can. You will notice that the lower you sing, the weaker it gets, in terms of volume and tone quality. This is normal, it does this to anyone. Consider your lowest note the one which sounds good and loud enough, not the ones which are barely audible. After a few minutes of warm-up and singing, you should be able to sing well a new lower note, probably one or two semi-tones below your previous lowest note. And after a few weeks of regular vocal practise, you will probably be able to dig even deeper in your vocal range, gaining possibly another tone or two.

Highest note of your range

This is about the same process as for your low range.

Sing what you think is your highest note. Then, if you try and go beyond that note, above it, you will notice your voice becoming weaker, in terms of volume, tone quality, and even more importantly pitch. Each small interval which you were singing easily in your medium range will now become harder and more challenging to sing. As you did for your lowest note, consider your current 'top' note, the one which sounds good, loud enough and in tune. The same thing will happen after a few minutes of warm-up, you should be able to reach a new 'top' note, slightly higher than your first one. And after weeks of practise, you should be able to sing a tone or two above your first top limit.

Conclusion

I hope it helped you a bit understand what your vocal range is.

Knowing which kind of voice you have, bass, baritone, tenor, alto, mezzo-soprano or soprano, is interesting but not crucial. I would say that knowing what your lowest and highest notes are is definitely useful. For example, this will inform you and the people you sing with about the key you are most comfortable singing in for certain songs.

The other reason for you to keep track of your lowest and highest notes is to challenge yourself in the next weeks and try to expand your range.

With no pressure though, keep it easy! In the end, what matters the most is not how high or low you can sing, but how well you can sing and how fun it can be!