

# 8 Things to Know When You're Looking for a Voice Teacher.

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You love to sing. You've always loved to sing. You've been thinking about taking voice lessons for a while now. But you don't know exactly what to expect. You may have some questions or hesitations.

So here you are online, doing some research. You haven't decided whether to take the next step and make an appointment with a potential teacher. You might be considering:

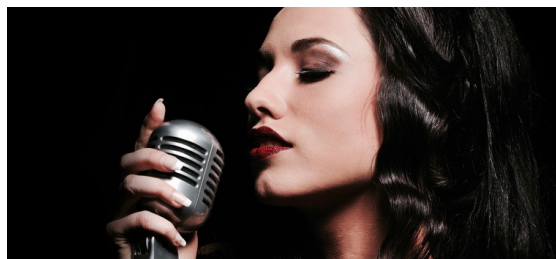
- When can I fit this into my schedule?
- Can I fit this into my budget?
- How long will this take?

Also, there are a few things you might be feeling a little scared about.

- What if I'm not a good enough singer?
- What if the teacher laughs at me? Or judges me?
- My high school voice teacher made me sing opera. What if the teacher won't let me sing my kind of music?
- I can't read music.

## ***Voice Teachers are a Certain Kind of Animal***

The following is a list of generalizations about voice teachers. Like all such lists, it assumes exceptions.



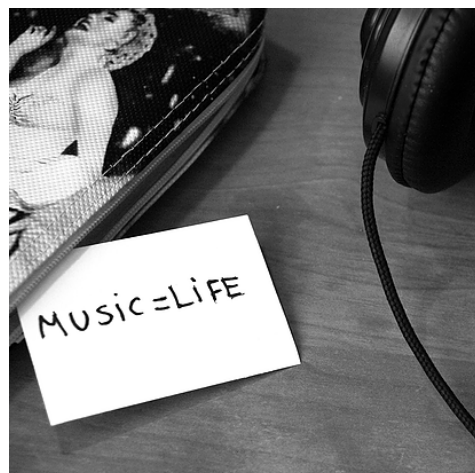
### ***Voice teachers are singers.***

Nobody becomes a good enough singer to teach voice in order to teach voice. Voice teachers are singers who are active, semi-active, or retired from a professional or avocational singing career. That means two things for you, the potential student:

- You voice teacher will be a great source of information about ways to share your singing with the world beyond voice lessons.
- If you ask the teacher to sing for you, you'll learn a lot about the kind of singing he or she teaches.

### ***Voice teachers are nice people.***

- If a singer started teaching five (or more) years ago and is still teaching, it's fair to assume that they like what they're doing. That means they like people, they like helping, and they feel good when they can help students reach their goals.
- While you may have heard (or experienced) a horror story about some music teacher, choir teacher, or Aunt Thelma shaming



someone about their singing, the likelihood that a private voice teacher will do that is miniscule. A professional voice teacher knows you're nervous and will try to put you at ease.

***Voice teachers do not expect you to already know how to do what you're coming to them to learn.***

- Do not apologize for not being able to read music. Very few singers can read music, and your voice teacher does not expect that of you.
- When you sing for a voice teacher they're not listening the way regular people do. They aren't judging whether or not you have a "good voice," but are picking apart the components of your singing so they can do their best to help you improve. You're at the doctor's office, not in a beauty pageant.

***Most voice teachers are classically (opera) trained.***

- The great majority of voice teachers have college training in classical vocal music. Opera, in other words. Most of them sing classically



themselves, and specialize in classical music. If you're a beginner that won't matter much. If you want to study classically, you have your pick of excellent teachers. But if you're looking to get good enough at singing CCM (contemporary

commercial music) to audition for shows or get in a band, then it matters a lot. You could set yourself back by studying with the wrong teacher. Ask your potential teacher if he or she has experience teaching CCM

technique. Share your goals and concerns so your teacher can gear your lesson to you.

## ***Friendly Advice About Selecting the Right Voice Teacher***

Here are a few pointers for how to have the best outcome from your voice lessons.

### ***Make a list before you begin.***

- What matters most to you? Distance? Experience? Personality? Have your priorities written down before you begin your search. If you find you have to compromise (which you probably will) you can compromise on the things that are less important to you.
- Some questions to ask might be:
  - What is your training to be a voice teacher? (Sometimes instrumental teachers advertise that they are voice teachers , but actually they're voice coaches. Different thing.)
  - How long have you been teaching?
  - Do you teach children/teens/adults?
  - Do you play an instrument? How do you accompany students?
  - What kind of music do you sing? Are you active in your singing career?
  - Where is your teaching studio?



If the teacher has a website, or teaches through an institution that has a website, some of your questions will be answered there. But if not, pick up the phone!

***Do not bargain shop. Seriously. Don't.***

- Of course you have to take the teacher's rate into account. However, that should be an item on your list of priorities, not your only criterion.
- As in all professions, people with more experience typically charge more. As in all professions, someone with more experience will usually do a better job, and get faster results. (They've already made their mistakes on other students!)
- Weigh the teachers experience and teaching rate against your goals and experience. If your an experienced singer or you have aggressive goals, a more experienced teacher is worth the investment. If you're just starting out with formal training you can probably learn a lot from someone with less teaching experience.



***Figure out any and all times you'd be available for a lesson, including travel time.***

- Voice lessons are usually a weekly appointment. You want to make sure that you'll be able to keep your appointment as often as possible if you want to get results.
- The more flexible you can be, the more likely you'll be able to take lessons from the person you want. Good teachers are usually busy and may not be able to schedule you for the exact time and day you'd most like to come for lessons.

***Know that the teacher's job is to make you a better singer, not to entertain you.***

- If you want to improve your singing, voice lessons are the way to go. If you want to sing while somebody plays piano for you, then you should hire an accompanist. There's nothing wrong with that...it's all good. But just know what you're looking for before you begin.

## ***You Deserve It***

If singing is your creative medium you deserve to explore and improve it. If you're a singer there are few things as frustrating as a voice that won't do what you want it to, and almost nothing as glorious as having your musical intention flow effortlessly from your mouth.



you

There are caring and dedicated professionals out there who would love nothing more than to help you realize your dream.

Enjoy your journey!