



THE 50 AWESOME WARM-UPS FOR YOUR CHOIR CHEAT SHEET

This cheat sheet is for you if:

- You're a new teacher, and looking to create a toolbox of choir warm-ups to work from
- You're a veteran teacher that's tired of using the same old warm-ups and is looking for new ideas
- You're new to conducting a choir and not quite sure about what warm-ups to use or how to use them
- You feel good about your warm-up process, but are looking to supplement what you already do

So much of your success depends on your
Warm-Up Process

- Try to do one warm-up from each category
- Warm-ups should change depending on your point of emphasis
- Warm-ups should have a specific purpose
- Warm-ups as your main instructional time for vocal technique
- Warm-ups also can be (and should be) influenced by your repertoire
- Have a primary learning objective with each warm-up, but don't ignore secondary objectives

Here are my **Five Main Warm-Up Categories:**

- Breath
- Tone/Vocal Production
- Listening/Intonation
- Vocal Agility/Range Extension
- Physical/Full Body Warm-Ups

Other points of emphasis:

- Vowel Formation
- Blend
- Musicality and Phrasing
- Posture
- Resonance
- FUN!

THE WARM-UPS BY SECTION

BREATH WARM-UPS

1-Lip Trills

Musical notation for Lip Trills warm-up. The first staff is in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of ♩ = 90. It contains two lines of eighth-note trills. The second staff starts at measure 6 and continues with similar trills.

2-Breathe and Hiss

Singers breathe in for 4 counts and hiss for 16, continuing the inspiration phase as they hiss. Singers repeat, increasing the counts with each repetition: 4/20, 4/24, 6/30, 8/36, and 4/40 (this encourages a large, expansive breath, but in a shorter time).

3-Koy-Yah

Singers can use the 'k' consonant as well as the articulation to feel a connection to their breath.

Musical notation for Koy-Yah warm-up. The first staff is labeled 'Voice' and is in 3/8 time. It contains two lines of notes with lyrics: 'Koy - yah Koy - yah Koy - yah - -ah Koy - yah Koy - yah Koy - yah -'. The second staff is labeled 'Pt.' and shows a single note with the lyric '-ah'.

Audio link: bit.ly/KoyYahWarmUp

4-Consonant Crazyiness

Use a combination of unvoiced consonants: P, K, Ch, T, TS, F, S, Sh. Divide your choir up into as many groups as you like, and give each section one of the consonants. Have them say their consonant, but have each group use a different rhythm—half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes,

etc. You can then have them change up their rhythm. Great for building rhythmical independence!

Video link: bit.ly/ConsonantCraziness

5-Legato Solfeggio

This is a great warm-up for sustaining air, and also great for building tone. Once the singers have learned it, you can switch to a hum or a vowel.

Two staves of musical notation for a Legato Solfeggio exercise. The first staff is in 3/4 time and contains the first eight measures of the exercise. The second staff starts with a measure number '9' and contains the remaining eight measures. The lyrics are: do mi re do re fa mi re mi so fa mi fa la so fa so ti la so la do ti la ti re do ti do do ti la do ti la so ti la so fa la so fa mi so fa mi re fa mi re do mi re do ti re do.

Audio link: bit.ly/LegatoSolfeggio

6-Tee-Hee-Hee

This one is all about the articulation, which helps reinforce connection to the breath. This also is a great warm-up to work on vocal agility.

A single staff of musical notation for a Tee-Hee-Hee exercise in 4/4 time. The notation consists of eighth notes with stems pointing up, followed by eighth notes with stems pointing down. The lyrics are: Tee - Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee.

Audio link: bit.ly/TeeHeeHee

7-ABC's

Used to work on sustaining air through the phrase. Take it at a fast enough tempo where they can make it all the way through on one breath, but with each repetition, slow the tempo down a bit to really make them work!

8-Air Elevator

Students start with one hand across their sternum; when they breath in, their hand goes down slowly to their waist (like an elevator). Once their elevators are all the way down, the singers



Audio link: bit.ly/NiNoNiWarmUp

3-I Sigh to Sing

Singers should strive for a relaxed, open feeling, like the beginning of a yawn.



Audio link: bit.ly/ISighToSing

4-Trill to Vowel

This warm-up starts with an ascending lip trill (Do-Re-Mi-Fa) and then descends on a vowel (So-Fa-Mi-Re-Do). I start with a brighter vowel, like [i], and then move to more open [e] and [a].

Audio link: bit.ly/TrillToVowel

5-Nordic Tune

Start this warm-up on a hum, working on a balance of chiaroscuro. Then you can change to different vowels to explore that balance.



Audio link: bit.ly/NordicTune

6-Nee Voo Nee

The 'n' and the 'v' help the singers to keep their sound forward as they sing through the warm-up.



Audio link: bit.ly/NeeVooNee

7-Ming Oh

This is an awesome warm-up for building a forward resonance, or “ring”, in the sound.



Audio link: bit.ly/MingOh

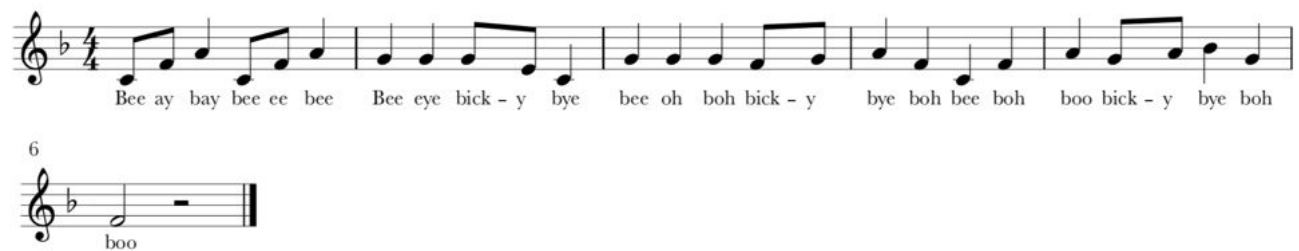
8-Messa di Voce

Singing on an [a] or [o], singers crescendo from “p” to “f” over 8 counts, and then decrescendo back to “p” over 8 counts.

Audio link: bit.ly/MessaDiVoce

9-Bee-Ay-Bay

Students should focus on singing with a free, relaxed tone. It is also a good test for singing pure vowels, and avoiding diphthongs. With each repetition, you can change the beginning consonant of the syllables to a different consonant.



Audio link: bit.ly/BeeAyBay

10-The Three Bears (to the tune of “My Country Tis of Thee”)

Much like the Goldilocks story, there are three bears in our story. The first sings with a very forward, even nasal, sound. The third bears sings with a very dark tone (froggy sound). But the second sings with a healthy balance of back space and forward resonance.

Video link: bit.ly/ThreeBearsWarmUp

LISTENING AND INTONATION WARM-UPS

1-Robert Shaw Interval Fun

This warm-up uses a simple series of vowels: [u-a-u-a-u] Purity of vowel is a must, and the singers must really be accurate with the intervals involved.



Audio link: bit.ly/ShawIntervalFun

2-Mi-Me-Ma-Mo-Mu

The exercise is simply on one pitch, so that the singers can focus on vowels and the kinesthetic aspect. Here are the actions:

Mi: hand pulls straight up from the top of the head; Me: hand frames the bottom of the jaw; Ma: hand drops down, as the jaw drops; Mo: index finger does a circle around rounded lips; Mu: hand pulls the vowel through an imaginary straw

Video link: bit.ly/MiMeMaMoMu

3-Chord Fun

Give the ensemble a chord (Do-Mi-So-Do). Singing on an [a], each singer can pick any note in that chord (in any octave). On your cue, the ensemble sings their chord. This warm-up

emphasizes accuracy with the onset of tone, balance among sections, and intonation.

Audio link: bit.ly/ChordFun

4-Solfege Round

Great for listening and part independence; you can do it as a round, dividing the choir up by row or by section. For a kinesthetic aspect, throw in some Curwen hand signs!

Musical score for 4-Solfege Round, Soprano part. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 75. It consists of six staves of music, each with a starting measure number (7, 14, 21, 28, 35) and lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: Do Do Re Do Do Re Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa; So Fa Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa So La So Fa Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti La So Fa; Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do Ti La So Fa Mi Re Do Do Do Ti Do Do Ti; La Ti Do Do Ti La So La Ti Do Do Ti La So Fa So La Ti Do Do Ti La So Fa Mi; Fa So La Ti Do Do Ti La So Fa Mi Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do Do Ti La So Fa Mi Re Do; Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do.

Audio link: bit.ly/SolfegeRound

5-Interval Up and Down

Once the ensemble can sing the exercise accurately, you can switch to a neutral syllable, such as [nu].

Musical score for 5-Interval Up and Down, Voice and Pt. parts. The score is in 4/4 time. It consists of two staves of music, each with a starting measure number (9) and lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: do re do ti do do mi do la do do fa do so do do so do fa do; do fa do so do do mi do la do do re do ti do.

Audio link: bit.ly/IntervalUpandDown

6-Interval Insanity

Once the ensemble can sing the exercise accurately, you can switch to a neutral syllable, such as [nu].

Musical notation for Interval Insanity. The exercise is in 4/4 time and consists of two parts: Voice and Pt. (Piano). The Voice part has the lyrics: do di do ti do do re do te do do me do la do do mi do le do. The Pt. part has the lyrics: do fa do so do do fi do se do do so do fa do. The music is written on a grand staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

Audio link: bit.ly/IntervalInsanity

7- I Know

Musical notation for I Know. The exercise is in 4/4 time and consists of four parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 75. The lyrics are: I know, I know, I know, I know. The music is written on a grand staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

Audio link: bit.ly/IKnowWarmUp

8-Slow and Steady

Singing on [nu], the ensemble holds a pitch and over the course of 8 counts, moves up a 1/2 step. The idea is that the movement is steady and consistent over the 8 counts.

Once they have that, have the sopranos and tenors move UP a 1/2 step, and at the same time have the altos/basses move DOWN a 1/2 step.

9-Interval Hopping

For an extra challenge, establish the tonic (Do-Mi-So-Mi-Do) and then start the warm-up on a note OTHER than “Do”. For instance, start on “Re”: Re-Mi-Re-Fa-Re-So, etc.

♩ = 75

Part

8

Pt.

15

Pt.

Audio link: bit.ly/IntervalHopping

10-Chromatic Conundrum

Have the ensemble sing a chromatic scale, up and down, in unison: Do-Di-Re-Ri-Mi-Fa-Fi, etc.

Once the ensemble is able to sing it in unison, do the warm-up with Tenors and Sopranos starting on high “Do” and do a descending scale, and at the same time have Basses and Altos start on low “Do” and do an ascending scale.

♩ = 72

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

8

S.

A.

T.

B.

Audio link: bit.ly/ChromaticConundrum

VOCAL AGILITY/RANGE EXTENSION WARM-UPS

1-Octave Slides

Like a siren, but more specific with pitch. Singing on a [nu] helps keep the throat open and the sound forward.

Audio link: bit.ly/OctaveSlides

2-Vi-Va

Start slowly, and then slowly increase the tempo while maintaining accuracy and articulation with the 8th notes

Part

6

Pt.

11

Pt.

Audio link: bit.ly/ViVaViVa

3-Leaky Boat

With each repetition you can gently accelerate the tempo--the boat is sinking, so you have to row faster! ;)

90

I Rowed - My- Lit - tle - Lea - ky- Boat - I - Rowed -

5

My Lea - ky Boat

Audio link: bit.ly/TheLeakyBoat

4-Pizza is Great!

Don't let the singers breathe after "great"--crescendo instead, and use the momentum to sing through to the end of the phrase.

Musical notation for "Pizza is Great!" in 4/4 time, tempo 90. The melody is written on a single staff. The lyrics are: Pi - zza is great can't be - lieve how ma-ny pie - ces that I ate!

Audio link: bit.ly/PizzaIsGreat

5-Ya Ha Ha Ha

The short version is great for connecting to the breath. The long version is more of a challenge in regards to agility to range extension.

Short Version:

Musical notation for "Ya Ha Ha Ha" (Short Version) in 4/4 time, tempo 90. The melody is written on a single staff. The lyrics are: Ya ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha

Audio link: bit.ly/YaHaHaShort

Long Version:

Musical notation for "Ya Ha Ha Ha" (Long Version) in 4/4 time, tempo 90. The notation is split into two parts: Part 1 and Part 2. Part 1 lyrics: Ya Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha-. Part 2 lyrics: 6 (indicating six notes). The melody is written on two staves.

Audio link: bit.ly/YaHaHaHaLong

6-Dee Dee Do

A very versatile warm-up; keep it all on one breath and think of it as one long phrase.

$\bullet = 90$

Dee dee dee dee dee Dee dee dee dee dee Doh - -oh

Audio link: bit.ly/DeeDeeDoh

7-Whippy Dip

The “Whippy Dip” is an ice cream shop in Decorah, Iowa (home of Luther College). On the way back down, tenors and sopranos can pop up a third and sing harmony.

For fun, change the destination with each repetition: Dairy Queen, Pizza Ranch, grocery store, library, etc.

$\bullet = 90$

I will go with you, will you go with me to the Whipp - y Dip I will go with you, will you go

4
with me to the Whipp - y Dip

Audio link: bit.ly/WhippyDip

8-Sing EE-AY-AH

Another very versatile warm-up: breath, vowel formation, agility, phrasing all included.

$\bullet = 90$

Part
Sing eee - eee Sing ay - ay Sing ah -

8
Pt. -ah

Audio link: bit.ly/SingEEAYAH

9-Back and Forth

This is a warm-up that I created to include more change of direction and downward motion at the beginning of the phrase. Make them work by thinking of it as having 4 measure phrases.

♩ = 90

Part

Do Ti La Ti Do Re Mi Fa So So Fa Mi Re Do Ti Do Re Mi Fa So La La So Fa

5

Pt.

Mi Re Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Ti La So Fa Mi Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do Ti La Ti Do

Audio link: bit.ly/BackAndForthWarmUp

10-Sirens and Sighs

Open, free and relaxed are the goals!

Video link: bit.ly/ChoirSirens

PHYSICAL/FULL-BODY WARM-UPS

1-Zinga-Zinga-Zoo

For the physical part: have the singers lock arms with the person next to them. On the first “zinga-zinga”, they lean left; on the second “zinga-zinga”, they lean right; and on the last “zinga-zinga”, they do the twist!

♩ = 120

Part

Zing - a zing - a zoo zing - a zing - a zoo zing - a zing - a zing - a zing - a zoo Zing - a zing - a zoo

6

Pt.

zing - a zing - a zoo zing - a zing - a zing - a zing - a zoo

Video link: bit.ly/ZingaZingaZoo

2-My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean

Singers start standing; every time they sing a word that starts with a “b”, they then sit/stand. When you finish, repeat up a half step, and gently increase the tempo.

Video link: bit.ly/MyBonnieLies

3-Tractor Pull

Singers stand a couple of feet apart, reaching out their right hand to their partner and join hands. Singing “1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1”, they lean away from each other going up to 5, and then, using their core, pull back to upright as they sing back down to 1. The resistance of the pulling sensation between the singers should mimic the feeling of singing through the phrase.

Video link: bit.ly/TractorPullWarmUp



4-Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes

You know what to do. To spice it up, do it *backwards!*

5-Stretch and Pat Down

Following stretching, we will sometimes do a “pat down”; singers start at the top of their body and pat themselves down, all the way to their toes. Finish up with face/jaw massage to help release any tension.

6-20 Seconds to Loose

Singers start in a tall, regal singing stance. As you count slowly from 1 to 20, singers should imagine that a drop of anesthesia has been dropped on their head, and with each count, is making its way down their spine. By the time they get to 20, they should be slumped all the way over, head and arms hanging towards the floor.

Wait a couple moments, and then count to 20 again; this time they slowly roll back up into standing position. When you get to 20, have the singers give a couple more backwards shoulder rolls, just to make sure they are free of tension.

Video link: bit.ly/20SecondsToLoose

7-Yup-Ti

Great for vocal agility, this energetic warm-up also gets them going physically when you add choreography!



Video link: bit.ly/YupTiWarmUp

8-"5, 4, 3, 2, 1....CONDUCT!"

For this warm-up, singers simply sing "1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1-2", etc., looking for a nice round, warm tone. As they sing, conduct a basic 4 pattern and have them mirror you. Feel free to spice it up by changing the size of the gesture, the tempo, etc. They have to follow you, and change their singing to match what you are showing them!



Video link: bit.ly/54321Conduct

9-Elastic Choir

Have the singers imagine they are holding an elastic band in front of them; they should start hands together at waist level. As they sing the phrase, they "pull" and stretch the band, keeping their hands at waist height. When they breathe for the next repetition of the exercise, their hands come back in, and they start again.



Video link: bit.ly/ElasticChoir

10-Stir the Pot



Video link: bit.ly/StirThePot

BONUS WARM-UPS

BONUS #1: THE SUPERMAN

Singers strike their best “Superman” pose (tall posture, hands on hips). The exercise consists of five vowels: [i-e-a-o-u]. The singers will chant each vowel 8 times, leaning a different direction with each vowel: “i” is forward, “e” is to their right, “a” is lean back, “o” is to their left, and then “u” is in the center.

After they do each vowel 8 times, they repeat the cycle doing each vowel 4 times, then 2, and then one, getting faster as they go.

Video link: bit.ly/SupermanWarmUp

BONUS #2: O IS VERY USEFUL



Audio link: bit.ly/OisVeryUseful

BONUS #3: DYNAMIC DESTINATION

This is a warm-up that I saw Tim Seelig do at an ACDA workshop. Super fun!

For this warm-up, the choir sings a chord on [a]: Bass-Do, Tenor-So, Alto-Mi, Soprano-Do.

This warm-up uses the numbers 1-8, 1 being the softest they can sing, and 8 being the loudest. The choir starts the chord at 1, and then moves a number at a time up to 8 and then back down to 1. You can then “jump around”, and see if they can approximate the dynamic level. Do this

one enough, and in mid-rehearsal, instead of singing at a “mf”, you can say, “sing this at a 6”, etc.

Video link: bit.ly/DynamicDestination

BONUS #4: NON-CHORD TUNING

This is from a collection of ensemble listening exercises from Graphite Publishing called “Intonation Choral Exercises”. They are great to use as warm-ups, as they really great to work on pure vowels, intonation, and (obviously) listening!

This particular exercise is called “Non-Chord Tuning”, and focuses on tuning Re-Fa-La-Ti.

Musical score for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts. The Soprano and Alto parts have lyrics: "Do mi sol la fa re mi sol ti do la fa sol ti re mi do la sol ti re do". The Tenor part has the lyric "Sol". The Bass part has the lyric "Do".

Musical score for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts. The Soprano part has the lyric "Do". The Alto part has the lyric "Sol". The Tenor part has the lyrics: "Do mi sol la fa re mi sol ti do la fa sol ti re mi do la sol ti re do". The Bass part has the lyrics: "Do mi sol la fa re mi sol ti do la fa sol ti re mi do la sol ti re do".

BONUS #5: CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE!

One great way to incorporate reinforce current repertoire is to create warm-ups that let the ensemble practice challenging excerpts/concepts in your repertoire.

A few years ago my choir was singing “Alles, was Odem hat”, from Bach’s “Singet dem Herrn”. The choir was having difficulty with some of the melismatic passages that show up, so we started practicing a bit of it as a warm-up. Within a couple of days, they had it!

♩ = 90

Al-les, was O -dem hat,

8

lo - be- den Herrn

RESOURCES LIST

Building Beautiful Voices: Paul Nesheim and Weston Noble

bit.ly/BuildingBeautifulVoices

The Perfect Blend: Timothy Seelig

bit.ly/ThePerfectBlendWarmups

Choral Singing Step By Step: James Jordan

bit.ly/ChoralSingingStepByStep

The Breathing Gym: Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan

bit.ly/TheBreathingGym

Intonation Choral Exercises

www.graphitepublishing.com/product/intonation/

The Choral Warm-Up Collection

bit.ly/ChoralWarmupCollection

Educating Young Singers: Mary Goetze, Angela Broecker, Ruth Boshkoff

bit.ly/EducatingYoungSingers