

Chapter Two: Learning to Sing Correctly

Lesson 4

The Voice

Teaching the Lesson

Learning a few things about the voice should help inspire the children to enter enthusiastically into singing. This is especially true of the boys, who usually look forward to the time when their voices will become deep like their fathers'. You may wish to remind them, however, that unless they learn to sing now, the voice change later will do them little good.

You may wish to use a rubber band to show how the vocal cords work. Blow across it to make it vibrate, stretch it to produce varying pitches, and use a thicker one to show how thicker vocal cords make lower pitched tones. You could also mention how laryngitis works: it makes the vocal cords swell so much that they cannot vibrate anymore.

There is an occasional child who has not learned how to control the tension of his vocal cords and thus the pitch of his voice. One way to help him is to find what key he uses in his normal speaking. Then sing many songs which start on that key and which do not go too far above or below it. Another way is to have him sit in front of the others during singing period. He can then hear better how the tones go up and down.

Such a child may even need individual help. Teach him to "slide" his voice up and down. Then hum a tone and have him try to duplicate it. Point up or down to show him which way to go if he is too high or too low. Let him know when he slides into your tone. (This exercise may be even more successful if someone works with the child at home.)

Above all, maintain a cheerful, positive outlook. Do not allow yourself to think that this child will never be able to sing. If you do, he will sense it. Besides, the problem may be more a lack of *desire* than of *ability* to sing. So by all means maintain a happy, appreciate attitude yourself. And be generous in commending him when he improves.