



Respiratory Exercises

1) Diaphragmatic Breathing

All breathing involves the diaphragm. But the type of breathing we want to do to exercise the respiratory muscles is called **diaphragmatic breathing**. This type of breathing is also called belly breathing or deep breathing.

There are many documented benefits of diaphragmatic breathing in the body ([lowers stress, improves attention and mood](#); [lowers your heart rate and blood pressure](#); and when used as part of a meditation routine, it can help you [cope with post-traumatic stress disorder](#)).

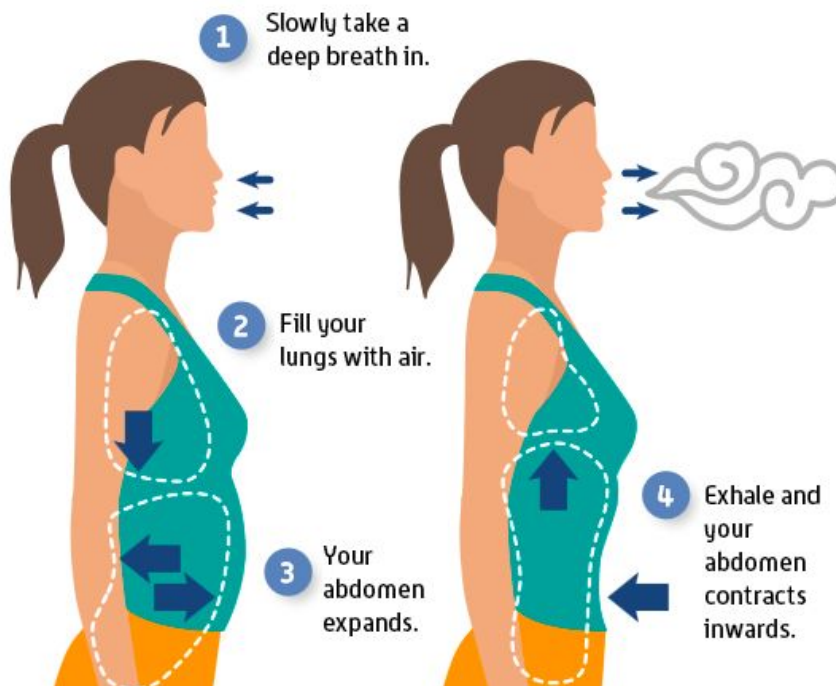
But diaphragmatic breathing can also help to improve our voice production by:

1. Allowing us to reach higher lung volumes (more space in the lungs) and inhale more air
2. Improving relaxation of the throat muscles and the vocal cords
3. Improving support and control of air by the diaphragm muscles rather than the throat muscles

Steps to diaphragmatic breathing

Here are the basic steps to diaphragmatic breathing:

1. Sit in a comfortable position or lie flat on the floor, your bed, or another comfortable, flat surface.
2. Relax your shoulders.
3. Put a hand on your chest and a hand on your stomach.



4. Breathe in through your nose for about two seconds. You should experience the air moving through your nostrils into your abdomen, making your stomach expand. During this type of breathing, make sure your stomach is moving outward while your chest remains relatively still.
5. Purse your lips (as if you're about to drink through a straw), press gently on your stomach, and exhale slowly for about two seconds.
6. Repeat these steps several times for best results.

2) Controlled Exhalation

Once you have a nice, deep belly breath, you need to learn how to control the airflow as you exhale. You don't want to blow all the air out quickly because then you won't have any air left to speak! You want the exhalation to be smooth and controlled - this will help you to power your voice for longer periods of time.

1. Breathe in for 3 seconds, then breathe out for 6 seconds. Put your hand on your stomach to feel that it is popping out as you breathe in, and coming in as you breathe out. And purse your lips slightly as you exhale, so you can hear it.
2. So breathe in for three: 1, 2, 3, Out for 6: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. In for 3: 1, 2, 3. Out for 6: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
3. If that felt easy, increase the numbers to in for 4 and out for 8. In for 4: 1, 2, 3, 4, and out for 8: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.
4. Do that a few times, and increase the numbers as you get more comfortable with the exercise. But if you start to feel dizzy or lightheaded, stop, sit down, and breathe normally. You can hyperventilate if you do too many of these breathing exercises in a row, so pay attention to how your body feels and stop if you feel any discomfort.

3) Controlled Exhalation on S

1. Breathe in for 4, and when you exhale, I want you to do so on an S sound, like this: SSSSSSSS. Make sure the S sound is consistent and smooth.
2. So in for 4: 1, 2, 3, 4. Out for 8 (on "ssss"): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Put your hand on your stomach to feel how it moves out and in.

3. Do that a few times, and increase the numbers as you get more comfortable with the exercise, always paying attention to how your body feels. The point of this exercise is to maintain good control of the exhalation.

4) Soft - Loud - Soft on S

1. Breathe in for 4, and exhale for 8 on the S sound. But when you exhale, go from soft to loud to soft, like this “ssssSSSSSSsssss”
2. You can build in as many soft-loud-soft combinations as you want, just as long as the exhalation is controlled and smooth.
3. Once you feel comfortable with completing this exercise with the S sound, you can switch the sound to an SH sound, SHHHH, F sound, FFFFFFF, or TH sound, THHHHH. The point is to learn how to control the exhalation.

5) Counting 1 - 20

1. Now let's use the voice. Take a deep belly breath, and count from 1-20 out loud, taking a breath every 5 numbers. Be sure to use continuous airflow and vocal cord vibration as you say the numbers, and put your hand on your stomach to feel it move out and in. It should sound like this:
 - a. “One, two, three, four, five”. *TAKE A BREATH*. “Six, seven, eight, nine, ten”. *TAKE A BREATH*. “Eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen”. *TAKE A BREATH*. “Sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty”.
2. If that was easy, try to increase the amount of numbers that you say before you take a breath until you can say 10 numbers in one breath. But always be sure to stop and take a breath if you need it - never try to speak with empty lungs!

6) Breathing Coordination

1. Once you can say 10 numbers in one breath, I want you to count from 30-39 in one breath, and slightly extend the TH sound, like this: “Thhhhirty, thhhhirty-one, thhhhirty-two” etc.
2. Be sure to put your hand on your stomach so you can feel the movement as you exhale.

3. You can switch the numbers to 40-49, and slightly extend the F sound. "Fffforty, fffforty-one..."
4. 50-59, and slightly extend the F sound. "Fffifty, fffifty-one..."
5. And then 60-69, and slightly extend the S sound. "Ssssixty, ssssixty-one..."

CAUTION: You know your body better than I do! If you feel dizzy or lightheaded, stop the exercise! Sit down and breathe normally. You can hyperventilate if you do too many diaphragmatic breathing exercises in a row, so please monitor how you feel and stop if you feel any discomfort!