

The Vocal Lesson Plan

Ten Basic Vowel Sounds:

Vowel	Sample Word	Type of Vowel
ee	as in need	Tongue Tongue Tongue Tongue Tongue Tongue Lips don't change
ih	as in did	
eh	as in red	
a	as in cat	
ah	as in pot	
uh	as in mud	
OO	as in soot	Lip Lip Lip Lip Tongue doesn't change
aw	as in lawn	
oh	as in moan	
OO	as in moon	

It is essential that singers sing the words with long, pure matched vowels and short, clean consonants. This is the basis for excellent diction.

Diphthongs:

Diphthongs are a combination of two vowels sounded within a single syllable, with the greatest stress on the first one.

- The first vowel is the important vowel of the diphthong. (80%) The second "vanishing" vowel should be executed quickly and deliberately. (20%)
- Diphthongs are "turned" when going from the first vowel to the second vowel.
- Both vowels must be heard. The first or primary vowel is sustained like a normal vowel. The secondary one is treated like a clear consonant.
- If the diphthong is not "turned," the word changes, i.e. "night" sounds like "not."
- Proper turning of diphthongs is CRITICAL to the balance and unity of barbershop singing.
- Below is a basic four-part harmony warm-up that is good for matching vowels and turning diphthongs. Think of a tall open sound and use the concept of singing "through" each vowel smoothly from one to the next.