

WORK OUT

EAR TRAINING

Environmental accompaniment.

1. Pitch match the tones around you - elevator bells, car doors, the pitch of a vacuum cleaner, a fork tinging a glass, church bells, cell ring tones. This is a big brain shift for most people, since we spend a huge amount of time learning to block out such tones, the hum of A/C or fluorescent lights, horn honking, animals calls or sirens.



2. Harmonize environmental drones (held tones) – try singing “In the Jungle” or “Heart and Soul” over a car door tone, using the drone as your first note. Any well-known major melody will work.

3. Improvise a made-up medieval chant or an Islamic call to worship over the drone. Most folks will unconsciously use a melodic minor or other minor-sounding modes. Moving from major to minor modes is good exercise.

Transposing a melody.

Sing a melody from a song, maybe from the radio. Then turn off the radio and sing the same tune but a few steps higher or down lower. Then also try a whole octave up or down for fun. For advanced training, try turning the radio back on and continuing singing in your different key a few steps away from the key being played.



Sound byte sampling. Mimic the exact words and speech pattern of a sound byte, like from an internet video or file that you can play over and over again to mimic as closely as possible. Try sampling from both genders, people with accents, people at varying emotional levels. Mimicry is a root level brain function that can make big technical shifts without having to consciously adjust each minute parameter. This is why acting exercises often affect faster results than technical music exercises.

Play by ear. Think of the melody to any song you like and pick it out on a piano, guitar, or any musical instrument, especially instruments that are completely foreign to you. Once you get it, try it a different key.

Certain instruments won't phonate your note without a little technical training (reeds, some wind instruments, etc) so go with piano or something that doesn't require that you have a specific blowing or bowing technique to make the tones.

