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PART II: THE BASICS OF SINGING

The more rock singers know about the process of singing, the better they'll be and the stronger they'll sound. This section is important because it'll get you started on the right foot so you won't damage your voice before your career even begins.

Study this section carefully, learn the exercises and sing the songs (we've chosen traditional songs to illustrate these techniques because everyone knows them). For best results, practice a little everyday and don't overdo it in the beginning.

Breathing

One of the least understood parts of singing is the act of breathing. It would seem that we should all be experts at this, having been required to practice it for all our lives. But for rock singers it's not quite so simple.

Proper breathing is important in singing, because the breath being exhaled works with the vocal cords to create the tone. Correct breathing uses the muscles in the lower abdominal region and allows the voice to gain its strength and agility from this area, taking the pressure off the throat muscles. This allows your true, clear, natural voice to be produced. Since the abdominal muscles are proportionately larger and stronger than the delicate throat muscles, it makes sense to allow them to do the heavy work.

This makes a natural approach for singing. Your body already knows how to do it. All you have to do is relax and cooperate. The deep, relaxed intake of air before a sigh is the feeling that you want to have when you take in your breath. The intake of air should activate muscles all the way to the lower abdominal region.

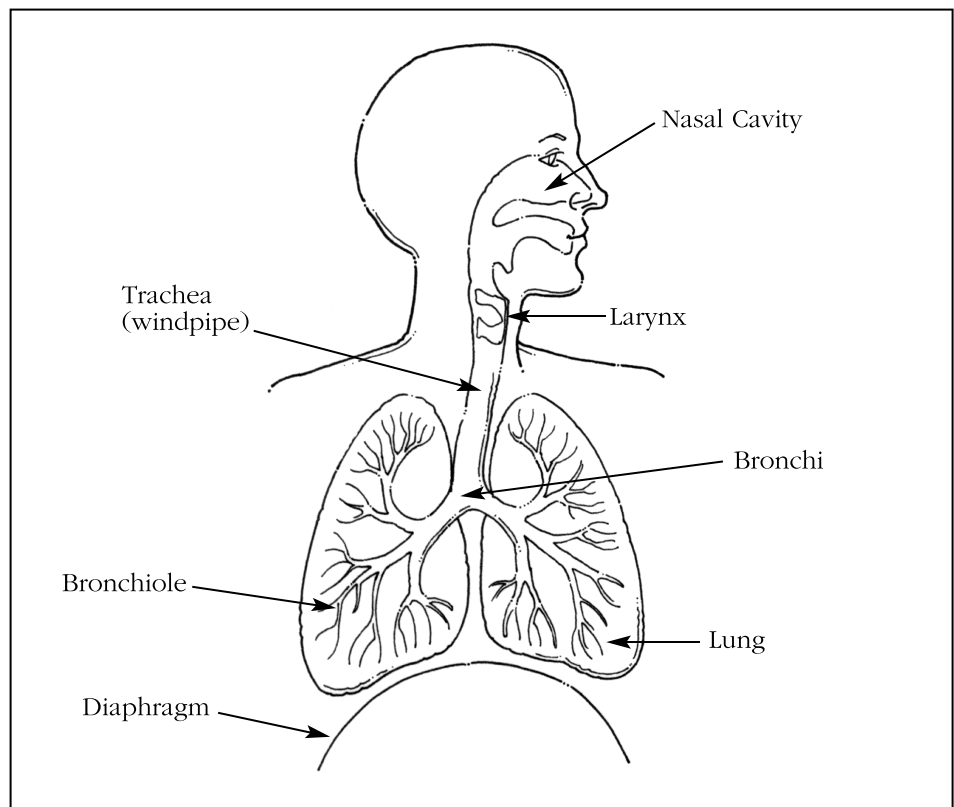
The normal breathing process begins when the brain sends a message to the respiratory system that oxygen is required. The **diaphragm**, a large, dome-shaped layer of muscle which separates the abdominal cavity from the chest cavity, is positioned just under the lungs and aids them in the breathing process. Upon inhalation, the diaphragm lowers, and the rib muscles lift the rib cage. This enlarges the chest cavity, creating a vacuum in the lungs, which expand as they fill with air. Then on exhalation, the diaphragm repositions itself, and the rib muscles relax, aiding the lungs in pushing out the air. Thankfully, the diaphragm is an involuntary muscle

or we'd have to spend all of our time trying to remember to breathe!

When air is taken in through the mouth or nose, it travels down the windpipe or **trachea**. The trachea divides at the lungs into two **bronchi**, one for each lung (see diagram), which branch out again 15 or 20 times forming thousands of tiny **bronchioles**.

The lungs are made up of spongy tissue. Their main purpose is to provide the blood with oxygen upon inhalation and relieve it of carbon dioxide at the time of exhalation.

It is important that the throat be a relaxed, open channel through which the air can flow unencumbered.



Respiratory system

If you have a tight throat, the air will not be able to function freely and can cause vocal stress.

Take a few moments and focus on the breathing process and your body. Take a deep, medium-sized breath and don't allow your shoulders to rise as you draw the breath. Shoulders should stay in a relaxed position, down and back, resting into the body, thus opening up the chest area. It is necessary for the chest to remain comfortably high and open for optimal lung expansion. When singing, this posture should be maintained throughout the inhalation and exhalation process so that the air is not pushed out of the lungs prematurely and the amount of air sent to the vocal cords may be regulated.