

Learning How To Sing (Read) Between The Lines

You might find when playing a song that you aren't familiar with how your vocals should sound. When you are singing, you'll find that it might be hard to know the pitch in which to begin. The easiest way to figure this out is by allowing the chord itself to come in for a *fraction* of a second so that you can hear the melody change. An example of this would be C – G – Bb – F

Take a listen to this progression and you'll notice a few important factors.

1. I'm beginning with a C Major, which is basically the 'midpoint' of ANY chord. (Why? Well, there is a middle C on the piano, and guitar is actually based with the piano in mind.) This allows you virtually limitless opportunities to either move up in pitch or down in pitch depending on the mood of the song. If you use the C – G – Bb – F progression as I am showing for example, you'll find that the G chord will sound 'brighter' than the C chord.
2. After playing the C Major, when you strike the G chord (open or barred) you'll feel the song move higher in pitch, which USUALLY means that you need to also bring your voice up from wherever you started singing in pitch with the C Major. (This is not ALWAYS the case, but I don't want to focus too much on singing in various octaves – most of us have a hard enough time singing period, right?!))
3. From The G Major you'll play the Bb, which FLATTENS the entire 'feel' of the progression. If it is flattening the feel, that must mean you move LOWER in pitch vocally. You are creating a wave or roller coaster.
4. After you've flattened the pitch of the song, you'll then notice that by playing an F chord, it gets a bit deeper in tone.

What does all this mean?

It might not seem like much, but simple ideas like this can give you a blueprint on how to sing a song effectively – even if you don't notice it immediately.

What we are creating here is a ribbon-effect, which allows you to easily determine (for the basic singer) how to match the tone related to the chord being played. You can use the piano's "middle C" as a guide. Take a look at the fretboard as it would look in diagram format:

Strings	Notes											
e	F	F#/Gb	G	G#/Ab	A	A#/Bb	B	C	C#/Db	D	D#/Eb	E
B	C	C#/Db	D	D#/Eb	E	F	F#/Gb	G	G#/Ab	A	A#/Bb	B
G	G#/Ab	A	A#/Bb	B	C	C#/Db	D	D#/Eb	E	F	F#/Gb	G
D	D#/Eb	E	F	F#/Gb	G	G#/Ab	A	A#/Bb	B	C	C#/Db	D
A	A#/Bb	B	C	C#/Db	D	D#/Eb	E	F	F#/Gb	G	G#/Ab	A
E	F	F#/Gb	G	G#/Ab	A	A#/Bb	B	C	C#/Db	D	D#/Eb	E
frets	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

What you'll see here are all the MIDDLE C's highlighted. This tells you that these C's would be the mid-range area in relation to the STRINGS on the guitar. In other words, you can sing at a very 'talking-based' voice without bringing any highs or lows in based on the string itself. Any chords/notes found to the LEFT would result in LOWER tone. Any chords/notes found to the RIGHT would result in RISING (or higher) tone.

So Left = L(ower) and Right = R(ising) would be an easy way to remember it based on the letters used.

Example: Take the Low E string for example. Play it open once. Then play it at the eighth fret. The space from 'zero' or the Low E all the way up to the seventh fret would technically be considered a lower range from the point of the C. Any fret played HIGHER (or rising) than the eighth fret should most definitely be brought higher in vocality.

Exceptions: While there is simply not enough time to go over singing in octaves or pitch modulation (plus it's ultra confusing) there are times when this comes into play. Artists like Radiohead and Queen use pitch modulation quite frequently as well as octave-based performance, so many times you just need to listen in order to find your 'starting point.'