

FINDING A PRIVATE TEACHER

Taking private voice lessons is the BEST way to improve your voice and become the best musician you can be. But, finding a qualified, professional teacher in our area can be challenging. Below are some tips for finding a voice teacher. Try looking for someone who fits these characteristics...

- **Teaching is their passion:** The best private teachers have YOUR improvement as their main goal. They seek out new techniques, continually learn more about singing themselves, and have a deep passion for teaching students.
- **Great ears:** The best private teachers have a strong command of vocal anatomy and pedagogy (how to teach). They are able to pick up on the smallest details and technical issues with their students. They are able to quickly diagnose what may be happening and can offer sound advice on how to solve any vocal problems.
- **Gets Results:** The best private teachers are able to make improvements with you at each lesson. While becoming a great musician takes time, the best teachers are able to get incremental progress with you at every lesson.
- **Great singing voice:** You should like the singing voice of your teacher. They should be able to properly demonstrate how they'd like you to approach your sound.
- **Instrumental and Musicianship skills:** Great voice teachers should be competent enough on piano to play vocal exercises and provide basic accompaniment for you in your lessons. Great voice teachers should also be able to explain and demonstrate musical concepts beyond vocal techniques. They should focus on helping you become a well-rounded musician, not just a trained singer.
- **Adaptability:** No two students, musicians, or singers are exactly the same. Great voice teachers can adapt their teaching to fit the individual needs and preferred styles of their students. If you are interested in studying classical, but you find someone who only does musical theater, that teacher is not for you!
- **Positive Environment:** You need to feel comfortable with your teacher. Over time, they can become mentors, friends, therapists, professional guides, etc. Make sure you have a connection and enjoy being around the teacher you choose.
- **Generosity:** Great voice teachers don't hold back their advice and willingness to provide you with what you need to improve. They offer time, resources, and ideas with the sole purpose of improving your skills.
- **Leave their ego at the door:** Quality voice teachers put the focus on you. They should definitely share their own experiences and use their skills during lessons, but only in a way that helps you. If they show off or talk mostly about their successes, find someone else. Great voice teachers should want you to be successful without them getting recognition or praise. In addition, great teachers would love for you to one day be better than they are.

Questions to ask when looking for a private teacher:

1. What is your teaching philosophy?

You want their answer to include ideas such as: “every child can learn,” “continual progress,” “solid foundation in technique,” “making joyful/beautiful music.” If their answer doesn’t match the type of philosophy you are looking for, find someone else.

2. What styles of music do you prefer to use in your teaching?

This is really up to your personal preference. If you are looking for classical, and you find someone that only teaches classical, you’re in good shape. But, if you are looking to study a wide range of styles, but the person you find only teaches one, they are not for you.

3. What is your musical background?

You should study with someone who has extensive vocal training and performance experience. That doesn’t automatically make them a great teacher, but it’s a good gauge of their qualifications. They don’t have to be a certified teacher, but it helps if they have educational training. The most important things are that they are KNOWLEDGABLE about how the voice functions and have the SKILLS to help you improve.

4. What would a typical lesson look like?

Again, this is up to your personal preference and financial situation. Lessons can be anywhere from 30 minutes to 1 hour or more. For a high school student, 1-hour lessons are the norm. At each lesson, there **SHOULD** be components of warming up, vocal exercises, then repertoire. Every lesson should dedicate significant portions to technique and skill building. If any teacher tells you to fully warm-up before you get there so you can jump right into singing songs at the beginning of the lesson, find a new teacher!!

5. How much do you charge for a lesson, and what are your payment options?

Prices for lessons vary greatly between teachers. They depend on the teacher’s qualifications, schedule, length/frequency of lessons, age of student, etc. Like anything else, cheapest isn’t always best. Obviously, your parents need to feel comfortable with the price considering the teacher’s skills and qualifications. I don’t want to include a suggested price here because every teacher and situation is different.

6. What materials would I have to buy if I study with you?

Each teacher handles things differently. Some may want you to purchase theory or vocal songbooks, others will use lyric sheets or sheet music from the internet. Similar to the lesson price, you need to feel comfortable with what you invest in your training.

7. What performance opportunities will I have if I study with you?

Many, but not all, teachers have large groups of students who perform recitals throughout the year. This is a way to showcase your hard work and practice performing in front of a real audience. Other teachers will help you look for auditions and performance opportunities in your area, such as community theater auditions, open mic nights, etc. This isn’t necessary a mandatory component of teaching voice. But, if you want your teacher to help you find places to perform, they should be willing to assist.