

# Functional breathing exercises for the actor

Mainly to control your breathing as an actor you'll be focusing on these areas:

- Relaxing your body, especially the upper part of it
- Maintaining a good posture to ease up the airflow and get rid of unnecessary tension
- Learning to utilize your diaphragm for deeper breathing
- [Strengthening diaphragm muscles](#) for more efficient breathing
- Learning to control your breath with various exercises

The following techniques should be practiced conscientiously and systematically so that the actor can master his breathing and therefore his voice.

## 1. Relaxation

First of all, the actor must relax while breathing and speaking in order for the breathing work to develop efficiently. This is achieved by reducing tension in the neck, jaw, back, shoulders and stomach.

## 2. Control of posture

The actor must build a good body posture to perform the breathing exercises. In this way, the respiratory system works smoothly. The body should be upright but relaxed, the crown of the head should be parallel to the ceiling and the spine should be in a straight position.

## 3. Basic diaphragm breathing exercise

The exercise consists of lying on the back and placing the hands on the stomach to perceive the work done by the diaphragm during breathing. The actor should inhale through the nose to observe how the diaphragm inflates and then exhale through the mouth to observe how the diaphragm deflates.

During this simple practice, the actor should be aware of everything that is happening in his body. Once this technique is mastered, the actor should do the same exercise, but standing in front of a mirror to clearly see the process.

## **4. Exercise to do before falling asleep**

While sleeping, humans use diaphragm breathing naturally and effortlessly. The actor should take this opportunity to observe his own breathing and be aware of it.

The key to this exercise is for the actor to grasp the mechanism of diaphragm breathing so that he can store it in his memory and then manifest it while acting. In this way, diaphragmatic breathing flows easily.

## **5. Abdominal breathing exercise**

Lying on your back, bend your legs. The soles of the feet and the lower back should be resting on the floor. Place on the abdomen any object weighing about one kilo, for example, a book.

Breathe in through the nose, swelling the abdomen. Pause for two seconds. Breathe out through the nose, lowering the abdomen little by little. Repeat three sets of ten breaths.

## **6. Maintain abdominal tension**

Lie on the back with the arms extended along your body and palms facing up. Breathe in through the nose, puffing the abdomen upward and the lower back toward the floor. Pause for two seconds. Breathe out through the mouth as if we were whistling, puffing out the cheeks. The abdominal muscles are kept under tension all the time. Three series of ten breaths are repeated.

## **7. Breathwork to do while seated**

The actor sits on the floor, the back leaning against the wall, forming a right angle, the legs are kept stretched and the hands are placed on the abdomen. Breathe in through the nose, inflating the abdomen forward and sticking the lumbar area to the wall.

Hold the breath for two seconds and finally exhale through the mouth. Repeat three series of five breaths each.

## **8. Coordinated Breathing Exercise**

The actor stands up and places the soles of his feet firmly on the floor. He must get rid of all muscular tension. Keep the back straight and the chin at right angles to the chest. Breathe in through the nose, inflating the abdomen forward and the lumbar area backward.

Breathe out for two seconds and exhale, once through the nose and the next time through the mouth. Repeat four series of four breaths.

## **9. Breathing exercise involving the ribs**

Standing, soles of the feet resting on the floor. The back is kept straight and the chin at right angles to the chest. Breathe in through the nose, puffing the abdomen upwards, while the lumbar area is separated backward. Breathing is continued taking air and opening the ribs to the sides without sinking the abdomen.

A pause of two seconds is made and exhaled through the mouth as if lowering the breath to the abdomen and continuing towards the ribs. Repeat two sets of ten breaths.

## **10. Sitting breathing exercise with coordinations**

Sit on a hard, high-backed chair. The spine is kept straight, chin at right angles to the body. Place one hand on the chest and the other on the abdomen. During the first three seconds inhale through the nose and in the next two seconds inflate the chest forward.

Pause for two seconds. Exhale through the mouth for six seconds, lowering the abdomen first and then lowering the chest, repeating two series of ten breaths.

## **11. Practical exercise for correct vocalization**

The goal of this exercise is for the actor to control his breathing while speaking. The five vowels should be pronounced emphatically through a whispering tone. Then, progressively, the tone of voice is raised until it is very noticeable. Repeat the exercise three more times, raising the tone even more.

## **12. Exercise to achieve total breathing control**

This breathwork can be done sitting, standing or lying down. If seated, the actor should place his arms on his legs. If standing or lying down, the actor should place the arms at the side of the body and keep the feet slightly open. First, take a deep breath for three seconds and then exhale slowly through the mouth. This is repeated 5 times.

Then move on to another phase of the exercise in which you should breathe deeply for three seconds and then exhale as if blowing out a candle. Repeat 5 times. In the final phase of the exercise, you should breathe deeply for three seconds and then exhale slowly as if you were saying "Yesssss". Repeat 6 times.