

**Designing Effective and Engaging Music Fundamentals Resources for Online Teaching**

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Dr. Rachel Mann & Dr. Katrina Roush

[rachel.mann@utrgv.edu](mailto:rachel.mann@utrgv.edu)   [katrina.roush@utrgv.edu](mailto:katrina.roush@utrgv.edu)

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

**Setting up Google Voice for Sight Singing**

**What is Google Voice?**

Google Voice is a free VoIP (voice over IP) application that works with your existing phone service and offers a secondary phone number with voicemail, SMS capabilities, and other services. Select a number and associate it with one or more mobile or landline phone numbers.

The benefits of Google Voice and similar applications are numerous. For students, it provides an easy, low-tech option for recording and submitting sight singing assignments as practically everyone knows how to call and leave a voicemail message, and they may sing in private away from their peers. Teachers, on the other hand, don't have to share a private number or sift through voicemails on a shared work phone. Teachers can listen to, download, and archive weekly student submissions to track progress over time, and the phone number can be configured so that voicemail submissions do not disturb users while being forwarded directly to an email inbox.

**Sign Up and Select a Number**

The instructions below will outline how to sign up and use Google Voice on the web, but you can also download the free Google Voice app from the [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play Store](#).

- Go to <https://voice.google.com/> and log in. You will need a Google account to set up Google Voice. Log in to an existing account or create a new one. (You will have to read and agree to Google's Terms of Service and Privacy Policy.)
- You will then be prompted to select a Google Voice number. Search by city or area code and then scroll through the available numbers.<sup>1</sup>
- Verify the new number by linking it to an existing mobile or landline number. All inbound calls will be forwarded to this number. Follow the prompts to complete the verification process.

**Configure Your Google Voice Number**

Once you verify your new number, you can use it to send and receive voice calls, set a voicemail greeting, forward calls to a landline, cell number, or email address, and determine if and how you want to receive notifications. For the purposes of using Google Voice as a sight singing tool, there are a few settings to consider.

**Record a Voicemail Greeting**

- Open the web app. Select or scroll down to **Voicemail** in the **Settings** menu.

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<sup>1</sup> Local numbers may not be available in all areas at all times. However, you may select a number from a neighboring area. (For example, there are currently no (956) numbers available for the Rio Grande Valley.)

- Under **Voicemail greeting**, click the teal **+Record a greeting** button. Follow the prompts to record and save your greeting.
  - For best practices, state your name (so students know they're in the right place), provide an instructional prompt, and wish them luck. See a sample below:
  - *Hello! You have reached Dr. Mann's sight singing voice mail. Before you begin, clearly state your name and class number and the page and number of your singing selection. Do outline your triad to establish your key and count off 1-2 measures to begin your melody. Good luck!*

### Call/Message Forwarding

- In the **Settings** menu, select or scroll down to **Messages**.
- If you want to listen to responses on your phone, select **Forward messages to linked numbers**. If you want them to go directly to email, select **Forward messages to email**.
  - *Configuring voicemail messages to forward directly to email makes it easy to send feedback to students. You can also store all voice messages in a dedicated folder in your email application for easier reference.*
- DO NOT toggle on the **Let Google analyze voicemail transcriptions** button.

### Call Notifications/Do Not Disturb

- Under **Calls**, deselect the **Get email alerts for missed calls** option.
- Under **Do not disturb**, toggle on the **"Do not disturb"** button. This will send all calls directly to voicemail.

### Security

- Under **Security**, toggle on the **Filter spam** button to prevent (most) spam calls.

### **Provide Students Instructions for Singing Exercises**

- Provide clear instructions for completing singing assignments. Remind students to state their name (and course name, if necessary) and what they plan to sing. They will also need to outline a key and establish a beat. Let students know if your Google Voice number is set to **"Do not disturb,"** or give them an appropriate time period during which they may call.
- For example, I provide the following instructions in my course syllabi for my students.

#### **Singing Homework**

All singing homework will be submitted via the course's Google Voice number, (956) 666-6666. Follow these steps:

- Find a phone, call the local number, and record a voicemail.
- READ THIS SCRIPT:

Hello Dr. Mann. This is (first & last name) from Sight Singing & Ear Training (1, 2, 3, 4). I am going to perform page ###, number ###.

- OUTLINE the triad to establish your key (if applicable), COUNT OFF TWO measures, and begin.

Note that all singing homework is due precisely five minutes before class on the due date. All voicemails are date/time stamped. You may record your melody as many times as your wish before the due date, but I will only check the final submission. Singing homework will be graded similarly to Dictation/ID homework.

- Once students submit messages, open them up in your email app or in the Google Voice web app. Listen to messages as many times as necessary before sending your feedback.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Legacy or Classic version of Google Voice allowed users to reply to voicemails via email rather than text. The latest update does not. Because my school uses Blackboard, I open the LMS gradebook, input a homework grade and email students from there. The Google Voice web app allows users to download voicemail recordings, so these can easily be attached to the feedback if needed.