

# An Exploration of Perfect Pitch and Phonetics

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## How To Study?

When you want to learn to listen to anything, the first thing you need to learn is not to focus on the tones, but to listen for your ears. You need to focus on your ears, like a wolf or a deer would : you can see their ears turning, and if their eyes could, they would probably look at them, but they can't, they can only show their attention is on their ears, and those ears capture the sound.

I own David Lucas Burge's "Perfect Pitch Ear Training Supercourse," and what stands out to me, is that although he feels what he's looking for, he doesn't fully get it either. If you follow it, you will probably acquire perfect pitch, but you don't know how you did it, because you don't really know what you're opening up to, which is probably also not the case for him.

I'm currently practicing ear training with Ear Master 7. It's a lot cheaper and pretty much contains all of the exercises and more that he wants you to do, without hours of talking by the man. It doesn't tell you that you should focus on your ears, but you have headphones on, so it fixes your attention on your ears physically, which takes away a hurdle.

What I've found is that when singing the tones for pitch training, I'm always singing the same vowels, but in different octaves, with specific vowels corresponding to specific tones. You can probably learn to hear these vowels immediately with much practice. What I do when I have to recognize them, which takes practice also, is listen for the tone, imagine the vowel, and then I know what tone it is. Currently it's limited to a C, D, and E, that correspond to an ô, â, and á.

I also have a pitch fork tuned to 440 Hz A, which I would sing as an oo, which in a high register seems 100% correct, but in lower registers, you actually notice a subtle difference, that also translates perfectly to the highest register.

This inspired me to sit down with my piano, like I had done once before with the opening up your hearing coloring exercises for David's course, and I had been a naughty boy, and also transcribed what I perceived as the vowel pitch colors, which was an analysis. David tells us not to do that, not to analyze, even though you probably should.

I thought I was going at it all wrong, so I threw it away, even though now, through the ear training with singing exercises, which I find the best way to learn, I turned out to be doing the right thing. And I'm not a complete bastard, not a bastard at all really, only when it's funny am I a bastard, so I figured I'd write down the phonetics analysis for you.

Mind you, not all the vowels are available to you in all languages unless you've taken dialect training, so you may have to look further than your own accent. Remember, when you listen for these vowels, listen for you ears, not the tone. Here's a table of the phonetics as I perceive them. After it, I'll further explain how to interpret the phonetics...

C	C# D <sub>b</sub>	D	D# E <sub>b</sub>	E	F	F# G <sub>b</sub>	G	G# A <sub>b</sub>	A	A# B <sub>b</sub>	B
ô	âô	â	áá	á	ái	ái	êé	í	êú	áu	ú

I've tried writing everything down in a variety of ways, but it's very difficult to write it down in such a way that it's intuitive. The accent circumflex (^, french: *accent circonflexe*) and the accent acute (´, french: *accent aigu*) denote that you should use respectively the short and the long version of a vowel. This means you pronounce the î as in "bit" and the í as in "beat."

The one **exception** is 'u' that I also write without an accent and then it should be sung as "oo." With an accent circumflex it would be û as in "fur," but I don't use that. With the accent acute ú stands for the Dutch "huur" or "stuur." Of this I know no word in English that uses it, so I hope you can either look it up or imagine it as a long version of û.

Other than that, when you look at the every two tones that have a sharp/flat-intermediate tone between them, so the combination of C and D, D and E, F and G, G and A, and A and B; you see that the tone in between them, respectively C#, D#, F#, G#, and A#; has both of their tonal qualities with a slight emphasis on one or the other. This emphasis I denote as an underscore.

In order to keep the tones in place I've sometimes had to reverse the order of the low and the high end like with the C-sharp: the emphasis is on the sound of the D but to me (now) it ends with the sound of the C. Also, some partial tones should be kept staccato, as in short, and I've written those up as struck through.

An example where I write it up differently than some would is the F. David Lucas Burge likened it to the sound of the word "where," pronouncing it in a whiny voice. Pronounce it slowly. Doesn't it sound like you have a staccato á and than an î? To me it does.

This is only a first exploration. To me, learning perfect pitch consists of four steps.

- (1) Learn to listen to your ears, focusing on your ears in space, and not the spatial location of the sound, to let the sound come in and be what it is.
- (2) Learn to sing the tones and to recognize the pitch you need to sing for every tone.
- (3) Learn to identify the tone you hear by finding the right pitch to sing in your mind without actually singing it and then name it out loud.
- (4) Learn to identify the tone you hear by identifying the pitch immediately by practicing relentlessly until you're sick and tired of it.

I think this is also what they would do when you learn to sing Opera. The four step plan is what I will now set out to do. I hope it helps you as well. Good luck.