

In the layman explanation, according to the vocal ranges chart above. The vocal range is merely the span between the highest to lowest notes

### **What is Vocal Range?**

The role of vocal range in classifying different singing voices to voice types is considered so important. However, there are times when these 2 terms are being confused with each other. The term “voice type” refers to a specific type of singing voice that has identifying characteristics or qualities.

Vocal range is considered only one of those qualities. There are many other factors included such as vocal weight, vocal registration, scientific testing, speech level, physical characteristics, vocal transition, vocal timbre, and vocal tessitura. A combination of all these factors is utilized to determine a singer’s voice, and categorize it into a specific type of voice type.

### **Types of Vocal Range**

The voices of women are divided into 3 categories: soprano, contralto, and mezzo-soprano. In the case of men, their voices are typically categorized into 4 groups: tenor, countertenor, bass, and baritone.

#### **Female Vocal Range Type**

- Sopranino (A3-)D4-C6(-F6)
- Soprano (F#3-)B3-A5(-D6)
- Treble (F3-)Bb3-Ab5(-Db6) (This type of voice only applicable to kids below 11 years old, as their voices haven’t changed yet. Some vocalists classify them as Sopranos, Altos, etc...)
- Mezzo-Soprano (E3-)A3-G5(-C6)
- Alto (D3-)G3-F5(-Bb5)
- Contralto (C3-)F3-Eb5(-Ab5)

#### **Male Vocal Range Type**

- Countertenor (Bb2-)Eb3-Db5(-F#5)
- High Tenor (G#2-)C#3-B4(-E5)
- Tenor (G2-)C3-Bb4(-Eb5)
- Low Tenor (F2-)Bb2-Ab4(-Db5)
- High Baritone (Eb2-)Ab2-F#4(-B4)
- Baritone (D2-)G2-F4(-Bb4)
- Bass-Baritone (C2-)F2-Eb4(-Ab4)
- Bass (B1-)E2-D4(-G4)
- Low Bass (F1-)Bb1-Ab3(-Db4)
- Octavist (B0-)E1-D3(-G3)

Each voice type is known to possess a general voice range that is associated with it. Singing voices may cover vocal ranges that have only 1 voice type, or they fall between the common ranges of 2 voice types. In this case, voice teachers use only vocal range as a factor in categorizing a singer’s voice.

### **Guidelines on Classifying Singers**

In general, most people use five key voice qualities when classifying human voice. These qualities are the vocal range, vocal weight, timbre or tone quality, tessitura, and passaggio. The correct classification of a human voice is necessary because if you misclassify a voice, chances are, you may damage the voice in the long run instead of developing that voice to full fruition. Here are the five key voice qualities for voice classifications:

1. Vocal Range – is the full spectrum of notes, from the lowest to the highest, that a person’s voice can produce.
2. Vocal Weight – is perceivable “lightness” or “heaviness” in the voice quality. The light voice is agiler while a heavy voice is richer and more powerful.
3. Timbre or Tone Quality – according to the definition of Acoustical Society of America is the “attribute of auditory sensation which enables a listener to judge that two nonidentical sounds, similarly presented and having the same loudness and pitch, are dissimilar.”
4. Tessitura – pertains to the aesthetically acceptable pleasantness of the voice of a singer.
5. Passaggio – is the term that is often used to describe the area of transition between different vocal registers.

In addition to these key voice qualities used in classifying singers, some vocal teachers consider other factors like speech level or the vocal register. The vocal register is a natural tone of the voice that emanates from vibratory patterns of the vocal cords in the larynx. There are four vocal registry types, namely:

1. Vocal Fry Register – is the lowest voice register that a person can produce in speech or singing. This voice register is lower than the chest voice.
2. Modal Voice Register – also known as the normal voice is the vocal register that people normally use in making a speech or singing.
3. Falsetto Register – is a higher vocal register that lies above the modal voice. The falsetto approximately overlaps the normal vocal register by an octave likewise.
4. Whistle Register – is by far the highest vocal register that can be produced and the most challenging vocal to perform. Thus, it is very rare even among professional singers. However, there are many people including the male who can readily do this register.

### **Understanding The Major Classifications of Female Voices**

1. Soprano—The highest singing voice that lies from middle C4 to high C6. It is divided into five sub-categories according to the vocal range, timbre, weight, and voice dexterity and these subcategories are the coloratura soprano, soubrette, dramatic, spinto, and lyric soprano.
2. Mezzo-soprano—The middle-range of the female singing voice that sits between the soprano and contralto singing voice. This voice range lies between A3 to A5 but may go as low as F3 or as high as C6.
3. Contralto—The contralto is the lowest tessitura of the female singing voice with a vocal range that starts from D3 to Bb5. A contralto that can extend her voice up to C6 is called a Soprano Sfogato.

### **B. Understanding The Major Classifications of Male Voices**

1. Countertenor—The countertenor is the highest male singing voice range that stretches from E3 to E5. Countertenors usually sing their high notes in falsetto vocal register and sing the lower notes in modal voice.

2. Tenor—This is the highest male singing voice using modal voice register only. The tenor voice range spans two octaves from C3 to C5 but can extend either down or up at B $\flat$ 2 and F5 respectively. Like the other categories, the tenor is also subdivided into subcategories according to the voice qualities already mentioned above.
3. Baritone—This is the midrange of the male voice, and it spans A2 to A4 with an extension down to F2 of up to C5.
4. Bass—This is the lowest singing voice range that occupies the keys between E2 to E4.

### **Choral Music Classification**

Many classify vocal ranges based on Choral music classification. Voices based solely on the vocal range.

The female voice is divided into soprano and alto; while the male voice is divided into tenor and bass as well as occasional treble for children. This can lead to misclassification in which a singer may be assigned to perform a part of the choral group that is not appropriate for his/her voice range.

Lastly, this misclassification may be harmful to the voice of a person for instead of letting the person's voice to flourish and develop in his/her real classification, this misclassification may damage the voice of a person in the long run.