

## Studio Management: Drop-in Lesson Sharing for Cancellations

by Independent Voices Associate Editor Cynthia Vaughn

One of the biggest challenges for independent studio teachers, especially during cold and flu season, is how to avoid cancellations while keeping sickness out of your studio. My studio has a “No Make-Up” policy ([CLICK HERE](#) to view) and tuition is pre-paid by the semester. A few years ago, I came up with an idea that works well for my studio, which mostly caters to weekly lessons for high school and recreational adult students. Quite simply, if a student must cancel a lesson with less than 24 hours’ notice, due to illness or any reason, they can “share” their lesson time with a sibling, friend, or parent. “No registration needed. No previous experience needed.”

In the past, a student who was sick might opt to come to their lesson anyway since they had already paid, bringing their germs with them! Or they might cancel, but feel resentful that the studio couldn’t/ wouldn’t reschedule for illness or a trip to Disneyland. It might seem callous, but it’s just business. I teach three days a week at my multi-teacher studio and I limit my personal teaching



### Sick?

If you have to cancel your lesson with less than 24 hours notice, you can

**SHARE YOUR LESSON with a family member or friend.**

(No registration or previous experience needed.)

scheduling to about 30 weekly half-hour lessons. If I offered a “makeup” for every student who was sick or out of town or had a tech rehearsal for the high school play, then I’d become resentful and, most likely, broke. However, allowing a student to share their pre-paid scheduled lesson time that week with a friend or family member encourages a client to choose generosity over discontent.

The truth is, that most voice professionals, can and do teach singers of all levels. Lesson-sharing would be trickier for my instrumental colleagues, because the substitute student would need to own an instrument and have some background

### SHARING YOUR LESSON

If you must cancel your lesson same day or short notice due to illness or unexpected events, did you know that you can SHARE your lesson time with a friend or family member? No registration or previous experience is needed. This is a great way to show someone what happens in a typical music lesson or to ask questions about music.

*Lesson Sharing example taken from Cynthia Vaughn’s studio policy*

and previous training. However, we as voice teachers are well-equipped to offer a one-off voice lesson to an absolute beginner or a more advanced singer who needs help with a specific technical challenge, repertoire selection, or an audition coaching.

During a typical twelve-week semester, I might have five or six students who take advantage of the option to share a lesson. Most commonly, the substitute student is a sibling who is not already taking singing lessons. Sometimes, a friend of a teen student tries out a voice lesson and likes it and ends up registering for regular lessons. A parent may use the lesson time in person or via phone or FaceTime for a parent-teacher conference or to discuss college options. Usually, but not always,

*“In the past, a student who was sick might opt to come to their lesson anyway since they had already paid, bringing their germs with them!”*

a student will notify me if someone else is taking their lesson time. The funniest story was when a man hesitantly walked in at his daughter’s lesson time and said, “Uh...hi? My wife texted me and told me to come here at this time, but I don’t know why I’m here.” I laughed and explained the lesson-sharing policy and said he could sing for me. “Uh, no. I’m not doing that.” So, we chatted about his daughter and her performing, and then he revealed that he used to sing in a rock band “back in the day.” We talked about his favorite bands and he ended up spontaneously singing one of his favorite classic rock songs for me. “I forgot how much fun this is!”