

# What We're Talking About: Social Media Groups—Do I Go or Do I Stay? The 12 Groups Rule

by Independent Voices Associate Editor Cynthia Vaughn

Social media groups for voice teachers are a blessing and a curse. On one hand, closed voice teacher groups allow a mostly open forum for a wide variety of voice-related topics. Popular posts and discussions include repertoire, technique, voice science, cross-training for classical and contemporary styles, business, and marketing. On the down side, moderators have the arduous task of setting the tone and level of civility and policing disruptive behavior. Some discussion groups set clear expectation for professional and respectful discourse and monitor discussion threads, while others are a bit like the wild, wild west where anything goes. As a general rule, the larger a closed group grows, the more unwieldy it may become. There is a false sense of security that what is posted in a closed forum stays in the forum, however in a forum of 1000+ members, it's safest to assume that anything you post can and will be used against you. That said, if you choose your discussion threads wisely and walk away from those that bait readers into pointless arguments, you can find helpful information and like minds in nearly any forum. The best groups are collaborative and intergenerational hives where experienced voice teachers and new voice teachers can learn from each other.

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NATS member and author D. Brian Lee recently wrote a blog post on non-toxic Facebook groups for teachers. ([CLICK HERE](#) to view). He writes, "If a group feels bad, I chuck it. I also have a strict "12 groups" rule for Facebook. I belong to 12 groups there, and if I join a new one, I leave an old one. I tend towards distraction and social media addiction like the next guy, and I have to impose some limits on myself."

You may have to try several groups before you find your tribe. It's also healthy to disappear from social media and forums and return when you are ready, or not. If you are a "newbie" to a forum, read the room before you post and use the search function to find topics

that may have already been discussed and discussed and discussed. Do not ask people to share or send you pdfs of songs or scores. That violates copyright law and undermines authors and publishers. And for heaven's sake, don't ask how much people charge for lessons or what the going rate is. It may sound innocuous, but it's called price-fixing and it's illegal. (Official NATS forums will delete any posts about pricing.)

Here are some voice teacher groups to check out on Facebook:

- [NATS CHATS for Voice Teachers](#) (public forum for members and non-members)
- [The Studio Challenge](#) (music school owners)
- [Voice Teachers for Young Singers](#)
- [Professional Voice Teachers \(PVT\)](#) (9,500+ members)
- [The New Forum for Professional Voice Teachers](#) (splinter group from PVT)
- [The Voice Forum](#) (well-moderated, focus on vocal health)
- [Voice Geek Group](#) (voice science and mentoring)
- [The Vocal Instrument 101](#) (basic pedagogy)
- [The SpeakEasy Cooperative](#) (co-working mentoring group via subscription)

Most voice teacher discussions take place behind the closed doors and inner sanctum of private online groups. Recently, however, I shared a public comment in a thread by NATS member Shannon Coates that sparked tiny fires across the voice teacher community—in a good way! ([CLICK HERE](#) to view original post.) There were dozens of thoughtful and respectful comments on Shannon's original comment and nearly 150 comments on my shared post, followed by several other voice colleagues sharing my post and receiving dozens of comments on their own posts. I was surprised and delighted to see comments from voice teachers across the country, local voice students, and "Muggles" who know nothing about the magic of Voice World! ("Uhm, what's CCM?")

Brian Lee admits that in even the best forums there is "plenty of posing, hypersensitivity, insensitivity, grandstanding, one-upmanship, condescension, and stupidity. But I guess I'm a salvager. I like finding good things in unexpected places. I take the good, forget the bad. Now if you're really smart and strong, you won't be on Facebook at all because it's a silly time-suck, but in a profession where there is so little collaboration and opportunity for real-time mingling, I have connected to some smart and good people in these groups."