

Voice Studio Policies & Expectations (2023-24)

For current students, prospective students, and parents/guardians

Akela Franklin, soprano

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Voice Studio Policies & Expectations

For current students, prospective students, and parents/guardians

Welcome!

Welcome to my voice studio! I am a Boston-based professional soprano with an extensive background in classical vocal pedagogy, choral training, and musical theatre performance & instruction. I also have experience in jazz, contemporary music, and music theory. I have over 5 years of formal music education experience and have taught toddlers to retirees in both group and private classroom situations. I've been running my private voice studio since 2018 and am currently accepting new students ages 5+. Listed below, you will find extensive information about my lesson policies, expectations, and teaching style. Please feel free to contact me with questions or to set up a trial lesson.

Trial Lesson Period

I adopted the trial lesson period early on in my studio practice as an equitable way for prospective students to try out my services before committing to lessons long term. This period lasts for two lessons at the length of your choosing at a discounted price. For details regarding specific price breakdowns, visit the [Offerings and Rates](#) page on my website and scroll down and click on the gramophone.

Here are some things you can expect to occur during a trial lesson period:

- For the first meeting, I generally like to spend around 15 minutes chatting and getting to know each other. I'll ask you questions about your level of musical experience, your activities, your favorite musical artists, what genre of music you enjoy singing, etc. We'll also discuss your long and short-term lesson goals (these can be as simple or complex as you like), and we will revisit these consistently over our time together.
- Next, we'll go through some simple stretches and vocal warm ups to ease into singing. Warm ups are important for establishing good technique and healthy vocal production, and they also help me get a sense of your vocal tendencies and physicality. Don't be afraid to be silly and expressive during warm ups - it helps you loosen up and enjoy singing!
- If you are able, please prepare a song you already feel some comfort in singing. It can be any style, length, or level of difficulty. It does not need to be memorized and it *absolutely* does not need to be perfect (mistakes are good!). I'd recommend picking something that makes you happy or elicits other positive emotions. If you can provide sheet music and/or a Youtube link, that's always appreciated but not required.
- Please feel free to let me know if you experience any conditions that may affect your voice or movement throughout the year. This could include anything from tendonitis, sports injuries, severe seasonal allergies, acid reflux, chronic pain, etc.
- I strive to make my studio a safe, empathetic space that affirms and accommodates all forms of neurodiversity. You are free to disclose any specific learning needs, mental

health conditions, behaviors, trauma triggers, etc at your own discretion. Anything you do tell me will remain completely confidential and will only be discussed in the context of improving your lesson experience.

Please note: For students under the age of 18: I would like to meet your parent/guardian, or the adult that is responsible for assisting with lesson scheduling, payment, and pick-up/drop-off. I need to ensure all students are getting home safely, and I also enjoy meeting parents in person to give progress updates.

Student FYIs

- Always bring your music, a water bottle, and a pencil to mark any hardcopies you're using.
- Attire is up to you, but make sure you're wearing something that is comfortable and easy to move in. Don't wear anything that restricts your breathing or limits your posture (i.e. unfamiliar shoes, tight clothing). When you choose your outfit the day of your lesson, consider whether you would be comfortable stretching in it, or even jumping or lying on the floor. Singing is a very physical activity!
- Come prepared! Make sure you have put in some practice time in between lessons (see "Practice" policy). Be ready to explain the background of the piece you are working on, and if it is in a foreign language, make sure it is translated. Who is your character? What is motivating your character to sing these things? We will work on this together, but make sure you are always actively engaging in the subject matter of your repertoire.
- Keep in mind that my studio is and always will be a safe and judgment free zone. Private lessons exist for your personal growth as an artist and as a human being. As your teacher, my job is not only to help you find a healthy technique, but also to guide you in your musical journey and celebrate our mutual love of singing. If you need to get something off your chest during your lesson and feel comfortable sharing, I'm always willing to listen and provide appropriate support when I am able. Any personal information you share will be kept confidential.¹

Repertoire

I will assign solo repertoire to students appropriate to their age, voice type, musicianship level, and personal interests. However, I am happy to work with students on music for outside projects. I can help check notes on choral pieces, run solos, prep for auditions, listen to scenes, and even give feedback on public speaking. While I can't help you *memorize* lines or music, I can provide you with suggestions to aid you in that process that best fit your learning style. If you're struggling with stage fright or any other sort of performance anxiety, ask me for tips - I'd love to help! If you want to spend part or all of a lesson working on music theory, sight reading, or ear training, I am completely fine with that.

¹ All information is kept confidential unless I am legally obligated to report it (Ex: If I am concerned for the student's safety and well-being or the safety of others).

Scores & Materials:

- I usually use my own collection of song repertoire with students, and purchase new things as necessary. If I assign you music, I will usually either give you a copy, ask you to look for it on the free [IMSLP Petrucci Music Library](#) website, or reimburse you for purchased copies. If you bring outside music to your lesson, please make sure I have a copy or be ready to reimburse me for the purchase of the score.
- There are a lot of really great resources out there for singers and musicians in general, so if you're curious about something in particular, please ask!

Practice Expectations

Students are expected to practice in between lessons. The amount of time you practice each week will inevitably vary, but it's important to set aside at least a little practice time, both to ensure your progress and for your own enjoyment. It can even be as little as 10-15 minutes per day! It is also important to note that not all practice should involve actual singing - you should also get to know your repertoire by reading and/or translating the text of your song, considering its meaning and emotional background, doing research on the composer, or listening to recordings of other people performing it. If we're working on ear-training, sight reading, or written theory together, you can also devote practice time to that. I always do my best to provide practice guidelines or assign "casual homework" at the end of each lesson.

Rates & Fees

\$70 per 60 minute lesson

Available for any committed voice student ages 12+. This option ensures equal parts technical instruction and repertoire exploration during each session. If you're interested in the nitty gritty of the vocal mechanism, this option is for you!

\$55 per 45 minute lesson

Recommended for any student aged 10+ with some previous voice or other instrument experience.

\$38 per 30 minute lesson

Highly recommended for students ages 5-10 or anyone who prefers shorter sessions.

Note: If you're interested in theory tutoring or dramatic coachings, please check my [website](#) for my rates and offerings. All attendance and fee policies outlined below apply.

- Payments are *always* due either at the time of a scheduled lesson or in advance. I accept Venmo, CashApp, and PayPal as forms of payment.
- For any missed payments, a **late fee of \$5/day** will incur beginning 24 hours after services rendered (i.e. I am providing a one day grace period). All fees must be paid in full within 7 days or by the time of the next scheduled lesson, whichever comes first.

- **Please be advised:** Lesson rates may rise at any time. The maximum increase is \$5 per every 6 months. Rate increases do not always apply to established students, but they do apply to new studio members or returning students who have taken a hiatus of over 6 months.

Rental Fees:

For any lesson that takes place in a rented rehearsal space, my fee will include 75% of the rental fee. Example: If a rehearsal space were to charge \$25/hr and we scheduled an hour-long lesson, I would charge you my hourly rate (\$70) plus 75% of the rental fee (\$18.75), totalling \$88.75. I would cover the remaining 25% myself.

Travel Fees:

I reserve the right to charge a **\$3-\$10 travel fee** for any lesson taking place outside of my home studio in Brighton. Instituting travel fees helps me offset personal costs incurred through travel time, gas, mileage, and/or parking. All travel fees will be discussed prior to billing and will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Cancellation Fees:

If you cancel a standing or previously scheduled lesson with less than 24 hours notice, you are liable for the total cost of that lesson. Exceptions may include personal/family emergencies, illness, COVID-19 exposures, etc. Please see “Cancellation & Make-Up Policies” for further details.

Scheduling & Attendance

Please reach out to me via email to schedule lessons. You may schedule a 30 min, 45 min, or 60 min lesson. I prefer to give each of my students weekly or bi-monthly lessons, as that ensures maximum progress and consistency. However, I am willing to make exceptions depending upon student needs and my availability.

Tardiness policy:

- **Students are expected to arrive at lessons on time.** However, life happens and we all occasionally run late. If this happens, just shoot me a text at (510) 220-0406 to let me know your ETA.
- I am only obligated to fulfill appointments within the time periods they are scheduled. For example, if a student has a 5:45-6:30 PM lesson but they arrive at 6:00 PM, we will still be ending at 6:30. If I have the availability, I may go over by 5 minutes to give the student a little extra instructional time - however, this is not a hard and fast practice.
- Students who arrive over 15 minutes [30 mins] or 20 minutes [45 min & 60 min] late to their lessons may be counted as no-shows.
 - **Virtual Lessons:** After 5-10 minutes have passed, I will call, text, or email students and/or caregivers to remind them to join the call. Once the allotted waiting period has passed, I will assume the student is a no-show and go offline.

- If I am late to a lesson, I will tack on the time to the end of a lesson (only if both parties are available) or make the lost time up at a later date. If neither of these are viable options, I will deduct the approximate price of the time I missed from the cost of the lesson (about \$1.20/minute depending on lesson length).

Cancellation & Make-Up policy:

- If you need to cancel a lesson, **you can do so up to 24 hours in advance of your scheduled appointment without incurring fees.** This is considered an excused absence and may be eligible for a make-up.
- If you pay on a monthly basis, you are guaranteed a make-up lesson for an excused absence. Those who pay on a weekly basis are not guaranteed a makeup lesson, but I will try my best to schedule one if at all possible.
- Any cancellations (includes no-shows) that are made less than 24 hours in advance of the scheduled appointment time are considered unexcused absences. In this case, clients are liable for the entire fee and are not eligible for make-up lessons. **Exceptional circumstances include:**
 - Illness (includes mental health).
 - Positive Covid-19 test
 - Known Covid-19 exposure
 - Family or personal emergency
- **What happens when the teacher cancels a lesson?**
 - I will occasionally cancel lessons due to holidays, planned travel, gigs, etc. When this occurs, I will inform all parties at least 10 days in advance. You will not be charged and these dates will not be eligible for make-up.
 - If I cancel a lesson less than 10 days in advance, I will attempt to reschedule immediately. If you pay monthly and a make-up cannot be scheduled, I will adjust the service rendered dates on your invoice. If you pay weekly and a make-up cannot be scheduled, we will just skip that week.
 - If I cancel the day of (I try to avoid this, but sometimes it happens), one of the following will take place:
 - We will reschedule the lesson for another time that same week.
 - We will double up lessons during a future week as close to the missed date as possible.
 - If a make-up cannot be scheduled, we will skip the week, and clients who pay monthly will either receive an adjusted invoice, credit towards the next billing period, or a full refund.

Illness

If you or your child is home sick from work or school, or comes home early due to illness, please cancel the lesson as soon as you are aware of the situation, and ideally no less than 2 hrs before the appointment. This is especially important for those taking in-home lessons which require me to travel. Otherwise, cancellation policies may still apply.

No-Show

- A “no-show” can be defined as the following
 - A student who does not show up to a scheduled appointment time and provides no verbal or written notice to indicate a planned absence.
 - A student who cancels less than 24 hrs in advance of a scheduled lesson and does not meet the exception criteria.
 - A student who arrives over 15 minutes late to a scheduled appointment time (30 min lessons) or over 20 minutes late (45 & 60 min lesson times).
- **No-Shows are liable for the complete cost of the missed lesson.**
- If a student incurs 3 or more no-shows during a 3 month period from the schedule, Akela Franklin Voice Studio reserves the right to take the following actions:
 - Communicate with the parent or student to work out a reminder / accountability plan.
 - If this aforementioned action does not produce favorable results within a 3 month period, said student may be dropped from the schedule indefinitely.

COVID-19 Policies

As of September 1st, 2023, face masks are optional at Akela Franklin Voice Studio, provided the following are true:

- All parties entering the studio/residence are vaccinated against Covid-19 and can produce proof of vaccination if asked.
- All parties entering the studio/residence have not tested positive for Covid-19 within the last 10 days.
- If any parties have knowledge of a verified or possible Covid exposure.

Any party (teacher, student, or accompanying caregiver) has the **right to request for masks to be used at any time for any reason.**

When to STAY HOME:

- If you have tested positive for Covid-19 within the 7 days or are continuing to test positive.
- If you continue to exhibit symptoms, even after testing negative.
- If you have contracted any illness that may be contagious and can spread through touch or exchange of air particles (flu, common cold, Covid, G.I. issues/diarrhea, vomiting, etc).

If you are sick but are feeling well enough to sing, it's best to play it safe and meet on Zoom.

If you have questions, please reach out to me and/or read through the latest [CDC guidelines](#).

Location

Akela Franklin Voice Studio
15 Lothian Rd, Apt. 402
Brighton, MA 02135

I am available to teach lessons from my home studio in Brighton, from your home, or from a rented and/or pre-determined rehearsal space. Please be aware of possible travel and/or rental fees when considering a space outside of my home studio.

Home Studio Information:

- My studio is located at my apartment in the Brighton neighborhood of Boston. It is equipped with an excellent 76 key Casio keyboard, a comfy armchair, enough space to move around, and plenty of scores to choose repertoire from. My eat-in kitchen and living room are both comfortable waiting areas for caregivers who may choose to accompany students.
- *Accessibility:* I live in a fourth floor apartment with no elevator service. Please contact me for more specific information.
- *Transportation:* My studio is accessible by the B Line, via the Chiswick Rd or Chestnut Hill Ave stops. The 86 bus line runs close by, and there are likely more bus and train lines that would drop you off slightly farther away, but still within 15 mins walking distance.
- *Parking:* There is only Allston/Brighton resident parking on Lothian Rd, and that is mostly what you will find on the adjoining streets (Chiswick and Strathmore). However, if you are only parking for 30-45 mins, it is fairly unlikely you will be ticketed - up to you and what you're willing to risk! There may be public and/or metered parking on Commonwealth Ave and Chestnut Hill Ave, both of which are only a few blocks away.

Pet Allergies:

I share my apartment with my two cats, Éowyn and Bartleby (Bee). Students who experience allergies are advised to either take medication before coming to my home studio, or we can find an alternative location if necessary.

Accompanists

During lessons, I mostly use the piano for warm ups and to play pitches and chords when rehearsing repertoire. This is usually sufficient on a weekly basis - that said, if you are performing in an upcoming event and would like to bring an accompanist with you for a dress rehearsal, please feel free to do so! Just notify me in advance and be aware that you will be responsible for arranging your pianist's payment and sheet music. Other than those particular circumstances, most students are fine working with me one-on-one.

Alternatives to live pianists (recommended for virtual students or for weekly practice):

- Youtube karaoke tracks (you have to dig around a bit, but there are some good ones out there!)
- *Appcompanionist*: This is an awesome app that allows musicians to adjust tempo, add a melody line for pitch support, add fermata and rubato, record videos, etc. You do have to pay for a subscription to get both musical theatre and classical rep, but I can always make recordings for you using my subscription.

Studio Agreement / Disclaimer

This studio does not tolerate racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism, islamophobia, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, fat phobia, rape apologists, prejudice, or hate speech of any kind. While we are all imperfect and no space is completely free from bias, my expectations for myself and my studio community include acknowledging privilege, doing our part to help further equity and inclusivity in the arts, and to treat each other with empathy and respect.
#blacklivesmatter

Communication

Communication is key to ensuring happy and successful voice lessons! Please make sure I have your current email and phone number to use for weekly communication and in case of emergency. Please also retain my contact information listed at the top of this document, and share it with your student. Students are free to text or email me regarding scheduling or any questions they might have, although this is up to parental discretion. I also prefer to keep in regular contact with parents and will be giving monthly progress updates in person or via email.

I look forward to working with you! Happy singing!

Agreements & Signature

- I have read the entirety of this document and understand and agree to all terms and conditions.
- I understand that repeated failure to abide by the terms of this document may result in cessation of private lessons.

Student Signature (if age 18+)

X _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (for students ages 5-17)

X _____ Date: _____