

# GEORGE'S GUIDE TO BEING THE KING OF KARAOKE

by George Ding

## Step #1: Take the time to prepare

Memorize all the lyrics to your songs, and I mean all of them – every backing vocal, every fleeting expletive and impromptu “yeah.”

Practice every chance you get. Sing in the shower instead of pleasuring yourself. Sing in the rain instead of pleasuring yourself. Really, sing any time you would otherwise pleasure yourself.

## DID YOU KNOW? 98% of people who attempt “Empire State of Mind” end up reading the words half a beat behind the music.

If your song is associated with iconic dance moves, commit them to memory. “Crank That” has Soulja Boy’s eponymous dance, “Party Rock Anthem” the Melbourne Shuffle, and “U Can’t Touch This” the confusion of the early 90s.

Practice your routine in front of the mirror. Know it backwards and forwards, like a soldier who can field strip and reassemble his rifle blindfolded. Run through your routine until you’re so familiar with it you wake up in the middle of the night mid-Dougie.

If you really can’t sing, don’t even try. Plan to turn the leading vocals on and lip sync. If you don’t know how to lip sync, rewatch the Beijing Olympics opening ceremonies.

## Step #2: Craft the experience

Karaokeing with you should be an unforgettable experience, like losing one’s virginity or being robbed at gunpoint. But to create this experience you’ve got to do the legwork.

Choosing the right venue is critical. Party World serves food and free non-alcoholic beverages until late. Melody has an ex-

tensive English song selection. Ibiza offers posh themed rooms. (I prefer the bondage one, but maybe that’s just me?)

Whatever you do, never buy drinks at the venue. If you’re a man, ask the women in your group to stash drinks in their handbags. If there are no women with you, really think about why you’re going to KTV in the first place.

## FACT! Karaoke is an integral part of making Chinese friends, sealing business deals and finding affordable companionship.

## Step #3: Control the console

Controlling the karaoke machine might be the closest you come in this life to playing God. The power to decide which songs are played and which are quietly forgotten is one that must be closely guarded.

Take a seat by the machine and move only to let other people choose songs or when it’s your turn to sing. Constantly check the upcoming song list. Make sure that while you were singing, some guy didn’t put in the entire Justin Bieber catalog.

Let everyone sing one song before you make your move. Once you’ve decided who the worst singer is (you’ll know by the number of people who excuse themselves to go to the bathroom during his song), program your songs to follow his. If he asks why your songs are always after his, tell him you have no idea. After all, you were just in the bathroom.

For most people, singing ability varies inversely with inebriation, so get everyone drunk without getting drunk yourself. A *baijiu* bottle filled with water works well. Don’t forget to pretend like you’re drunk – stumble around, hit on your best friend. If people are still suspicious, start sobbing uncontrollably.

## Step #4: Leave it all on the floor

This is it. The moment you’ve been training for. Stand up straight. Grin. Don’t hold the mic like you’re about to do something inappropriate to it.

Your first song selection should be something light. Once you’re warmed up, move into songs that display your vocal range. Break out the screamers only when you’re ready to go home. If you can talk the next day, then you held back. Shame on you.

## DID YOU KNOW? Scientific studies have shown that falsetto is an aphrodisiac.

Choosing obscure songs at KTV is taboo but choosing familiar songs has its own dangers. Just try to sing “Don’t Stop Believin’” without everybody chiming in. If your companions are overzealous, they can drown out your voice. If this happens, side over to the wall and discreetly unplug their microphone. If someone notices, feign surprise but leave it unplugged.

Method karaoke always wins fans. Though it can be as simple as channeling the original performer’s gestures, using props and costumes show that you’re playing to win. Bringing an umbrella for “Umbrella” is forgettable, but people will talk if you sing “Single Ladies” in a black leotard and titanium roboglove.

## TIP! Lady Gaga should be left to method karaokeers with extensive wardrobe budgets.

Perform at least one Chinese song, the corrier the better. “Pengyou” (朋友) is a perennial favorite. If you do it right, by the end of the song everyone should be swaying to the music with their arms around each other’s shoulders. There is no better time than karaoke to impress your boss or renegotiate rent with your landlord.

If, on the off chance, you encounter someone who can actually sing, cut their song after the chorus and make it look like an accident. Do not do this more than twice. If they continue to sing, then it’s time to swallow your pride. Take turns singing backup for each other. Offer to sing a duet. But, if the opportunity arises, do not hesitate to unplug their microphone.

