

## A LITTLE SPACE

Leave yourself a little space.

I advise singers to choose an audition song that shows off their voice but not to pick one whose top note is their top note. I myself can usually sing an A-flat (sometimes higher with appropriate rest, the right vowel sound, and a favorable alignment of the planets), but my audition song goes to an F. I avoid stress and the possibility of poor performance by leaving myself a little space.

Leaving yourself a little space is a strategy with broad applications. Avoiding tailgating when you're driving is an obvious one. Perhaps the two most rewarding applications are in budgeting one's time and one's money. You don't want to waste your money, and whether or not you agree with the maxim "time is money," you don't want to waste time either.

I have preached to my children that a person who makes \$50K a year and spends \$48K is happy whereas a person who makes \$50K and spends \$52K is unhappy. Sadly, I am frequently better at the preaching than the practice. Having things, buying things makes me feel good. Not having enough money to buy what I want and/or what I think I need makes me anxious and unhappy. If I leave myself a little space in my budget or spending plan, I am less likely to find myself feeling frustrated and deprived.

Of course, if you have no budget, you have no idea if there is space left or not. It is a very useful discipline (particularly when tax time rolls around) to keep track of every penny you spend — whether in a ledger (as I did for years) or with a computer software application. If that seems like a lifetime punishment, keep track of what you spend for two or three months. You will be surprised (and perhaps horrified) to see where your money goes.