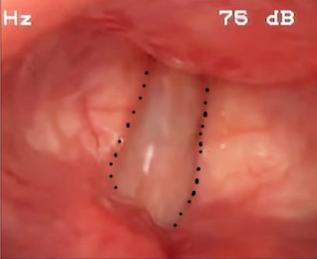
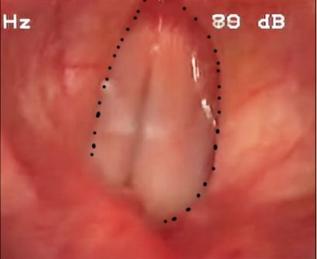
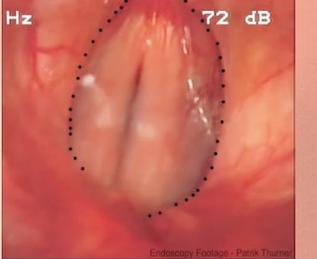


False Vocal Fold Control

Basics

The “**false vocal folds**” (FVF), are a secondary pair of folds that sit above the true vocal folds. They form a protective layer for trachea and true vocal folds (TVF). The false folds often **constrict** when an individual exerts force, strain, or groans in pain. These false folds can also **retract** out of the way when an individual needs air such as in laughing, sniffing, or gasping. When constricting, the sound turns tight, strained, compressed, turbulent, noisy, grainy, or husky. When retracting, the sound becomes purer and cleaner. The middle position (neither retraction nor constriction) is a neutral, generalized sound which has no notable quality--a casual unaffected, dull “huh?” can often reveal the (non)sound.

FALSE FOLD OVERVIEW

CONstriction	NEUTRAL	RETRACTION
		
<p>What: Constriction is formed by squeezing the false folds inwards and disrupting air flow. This is a very common issue when attempting to alter the voice. When an individual feels “strained” or “labored” constriction is often present.</p>	<p>What: Neutral is defined by a non-notable position of the false folds. Average voices present this most often. This position represents no active retraction or constriction.</p>	<p>What: Retraction is formed by spreading the false folds apart and permitting air to pass easier. This occurs during sniffing, laughing, and other reflexes. Controlling it allows the voice to become purer and smoother.</p>
<p>Sound: Grainy, husky, harsh, noisy, crushed, tight, tense, labored, tense, and/or compressed</p>	<p>Sound: Dull, untrained, casual, unremarkable, lazy, bored, plain, stale, relaxed</p>	<p>Sound: Pure, smooth, clean, open, polished, sweet, refined, clear, and/or dulcet</p>
constriction	neutral	retraction

TransVoiceLessons

Why is it Important?

One of the most common mistakes in voice feminization is accidental constriction of the false folds. Those who have undesirable constriction in their voice can remedy the problem by gaining awareness of this and applying active retraction to offset the constriction. Additionally, those who wish to further feminize or hyperfeminize the glottal behavior will find retraction especially beneficial as a “thinness boost”.

Constriction sounds audibly grainy, rough, tense, pinched, and in some cases husky or elderly. It’s often uncomfortable to maintain and can cause vocal fold irritation. It signals to a listener that the speaker is applying effort, straining, or exerting themselves. In contrast, added retraction offers a purer, cleaner, and sweeter sound quality. It’s very gentle on the vocal folds and can decrease vocal fatigue. Retraction signals to a listener congeniality, receptiveness, and pleasantness.

How To Utilize:

First, listen carefully to the ear training audio files. Try to form associations with the different sounds. Mimic along with the files and reflect on what you experience. Then, explore constriction with the exercises provided. Observe how constriction feels, how it influences the sound, and what it makes you think of. Constriction is a physically feelable control. Then, repeat the process of exploration, observation, and self interrogation with retraction. The goal should be to gain some degree of awareness for this part of the voice. The function of this document area is to introduce and encourage exploration of this space.

Listening and Ear Training

Listen carefully to the following examples of false fold activity.

1. Listen to “**Constriction**”

- [Overview](#)
- [Why It’s Relevant](#)
- [Example 1](#)
- [Example 2](#)

2. Listen to “**Retraction**”

- [Overview](#)
- [Why It’s Relevant](#)
- [Example 1](#)
- [Example 2](#)

3. Listen to “**Neutral**”

- [Overview](#)
 - [Why It's Relevant](#)
 - [Example 1](#)
-

Exploring FVF Control:

Approaches to Explore Constriction

Below are four basic approaches to explore, observe, and interact with false fold **constriction**. Constriction is rarely desired. Our goal in exploring constriction is to become aware of it so if/when it creeps into our sound, we can be aware of its influence. Constriction is also valuable to explore as it’s an opposite to retraction. Constriction can come in many different qualities. As you explore it, you will become more familiar with the various forms constriction can take. Constriction can be irritating, so go easy and just explore!

1. **Elderly Voice:** [\[Example\]](#)

In this approach we imitate the sound of an elderly voice (presbyphonia). When successfully imitating this sound, the false folds will constrict. Listen carefully, imitate closely, and observe what you feel!

2. **Glottal Tap + Constriction** [\[Example\]](#)

Begin with a light “glottal tap”. Experiment with adding constriction while continuing the light glottal tap. This is a very effective way to observe the feeling of constriction around the onset of sound. Switching back and forth from tapping with/without constriction can help draw awareness to the sensation of unwanted constriction.

3. **Squeezing the Airstream** [\[Example\]](#)

Begin with gentle, controlled exhalation of air. Slowly try to squeeze and “compress” the airstream. The sound quality of a voiceless airstream tells us what is occurring with our false folds. A diffused, near silent air stream indicates retraction (or too slow of airflow). A compressed, loud, hissing air stream indicates constriction. Listen carefully to the audio file and try to imitate the sounds. Explore and observe the sensation.

4. **Groaning in Pain** [\[Example\]](#)

When groaning in pain, it often encourages constriction of the false folds. Imitate and experiment with the sound of groaning and reflect on the sensation.

Approaches to Explore Retraction

Below are four basic approaches to explore, observe, and interact with false fold **retraction**. Retraction is primarily learned as a tool for *actively* working against habits of constriction. However, it can also be used as an added boost to softening and cleaning up the sound. Retraction is subtle but impactful. Ideally, as you explore it, you will become more familiar with the way it feels and sounds. The way airflow moves through the vocal tract during retraction often feels “colder” or more “diffused”. Many individuals have described this as a “smile in the throat” kind of sensation. You may also feel a subtle “spreading” or “moving back” of the glottal area.

1. **Retracting on /h/:** [\[Example\]](#)

The sound /h/, as in Hot, utilizes some degree of false fold constriction. Begin by producing a steady /h/ sound. Incrementally work to make the /h/ become silent. Maintain the same airflow rate. If done correctly, you should feel the active muscular effort of retraction. If you feel you’ve found it, try to hold the posture and note how it feels. Experiment with producing pitch after holding this silent /h/.

2. **Gasping Silently:** [\[Example\]](#)

Begin by lightly gasping and observe the feeling. Note if you feel any retraction or subtle “opening” sensations. Then, try gasping silently and observe if you feel anything different. Listen to the audio file and work to produce the distinct, clear, and near-silent gasp as a target. If you feel or hear the retraction, try to hold the position and lightly flex or relax the retraction to gain basic control.

3. **Silent Laughter trigger** [\[Example\]](#)

Imagine yourself starting to laugh then stop right before making a sound. If you genuinely commit to feeling laughter bubbling up, you will likely retract your false folds. This exercise is done purely in silence so its effectiveness is based on the student committing to feeling the laughter sensation and trying to observe the retraction happening simultaneously. Listen to the audio file and I will walk you through it. This is an approach made popular by Jo Estill.

4. **Pure Mimicry** [\[Example\]](#)

In this approach we imitate the sound of a retraction. For feminization purposes, I will be demonstrating thin voice + retraction. When successfully imitating this sound, the false folds will retract. Listen carefully, imitate closely, and observe what you feel!

Conclusion:

Ultimately, the false folds are a tertiary vocal function which conveys less about a person's sex and more about their physical status of relaxed, open, or tense. There is a physiological difference between the false fold mass of testosterone exposed and non-testosterone exposed voices.

Individuals seeking feminization therefore have three primary uses for gaining awareness and control of the false folds:

I) Constriction is an extremely common mistake in voice feminization. By understanding the experience of constriction, you will be able to avoid it. By understanding retraction, you can actively work to undo constriction. Put special priority on learning how to raise R1 while avoiding constriction or increasing retraction.

II) Retraction offers a "thinness" boost to voices, providing greater clarity, purity, and a cleaner sound which is often reported as more feminine. This retraction essentially allows us to mirror the neutral false fold mass of female averages while hyper retraction allows for mirroring the retracted female average. Additionally, as the false folds retract, the epilarynx narrows causing the resonance to brighten further. As a result, this also causes the creation of sound to require less airflow to phonate.

III) False fold control allows for a wider variety of self expression. Most voices naturally ebb and flow between constricted, retracted, and neutral states depending on the context. Constriction often indicates tenseness, labor, and apprehension. Neutral communicates a lazy, casual, dull, relaxed tone. Retraction communicates comfort, receptiveness, gregariousness, and/or positivity due to its presence during many key social interactions such as talking to children, laughing, animals, pleasant surprise at seeing an old friend, etc.

General Application:

After critical listening, exploration of the false folds, and reflection on your experience, try to control them freely during your speech. Even if you struggle to fully control them, the attempt to exercise control and awareness is how progress occurs. Experiment with all varieties of false fold control and juxtapose the control against different vocal elements such as pitch control, tongue position, larynx height, etc to observe how they are connected.

While we frame the control of the false folds as a highly isolated element, the false folds behave in tandem with the rest of the larynx. At the glottal level, all parameters are slightly related in some way. Experimentation will reveal to you how independent you can get your control and what elements are influenced by it. Resonance control seems to be automatically paired with false fold behaviors in untrained voices. Darker resonance postures encourage retraction while bright resonance postures encourage constriction. This "natural" attraction high resonance and constriction have with each other is a fundamental challenge of voice feminization.

Return back to previous vocal exercises you've learned from and apply this newfound awareness. Pay close attention to any traces of constriction and work to remove it (unless aesthetically desired). Introduce any degree of retraction you want. False fold control is a powerful expressive tool -- use it wisely!

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