

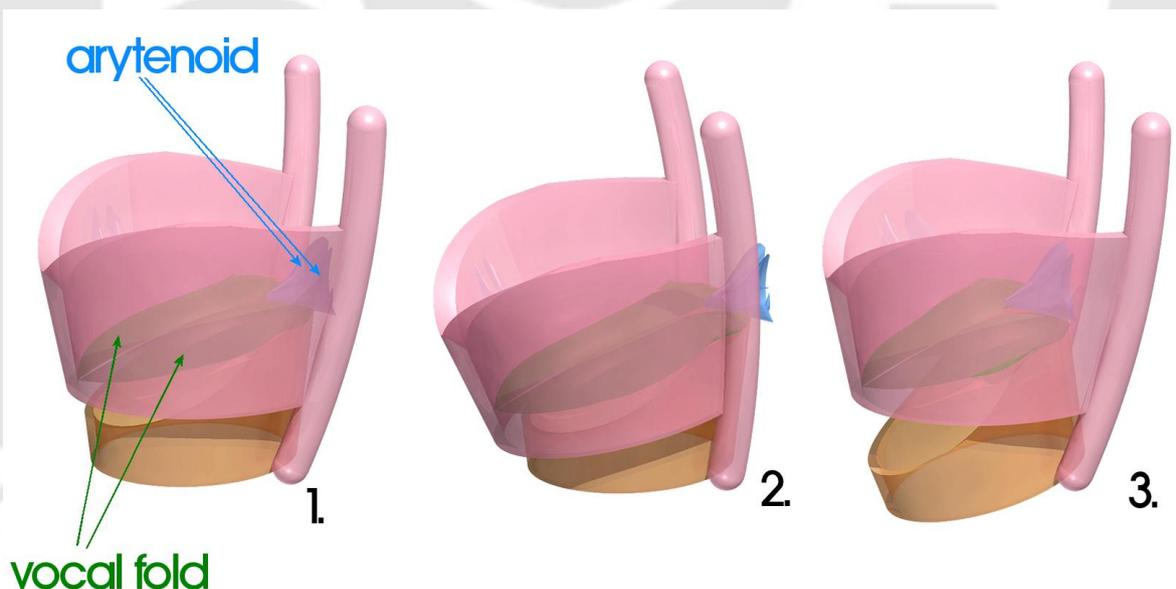
Movable Transition 101

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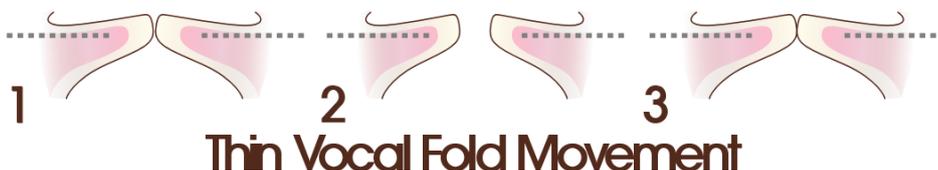


There is a misconception amongst some singers as to how the throat should feel when one is singing. Many believe that the “speaking voice” and the “singing voice” are two separate things. In actuality, a singer only has one voice. However, there are multiple vocal positions which the trained singer can use at any time depending upon the singer’s established vocal range and the needs of the piece being performed.

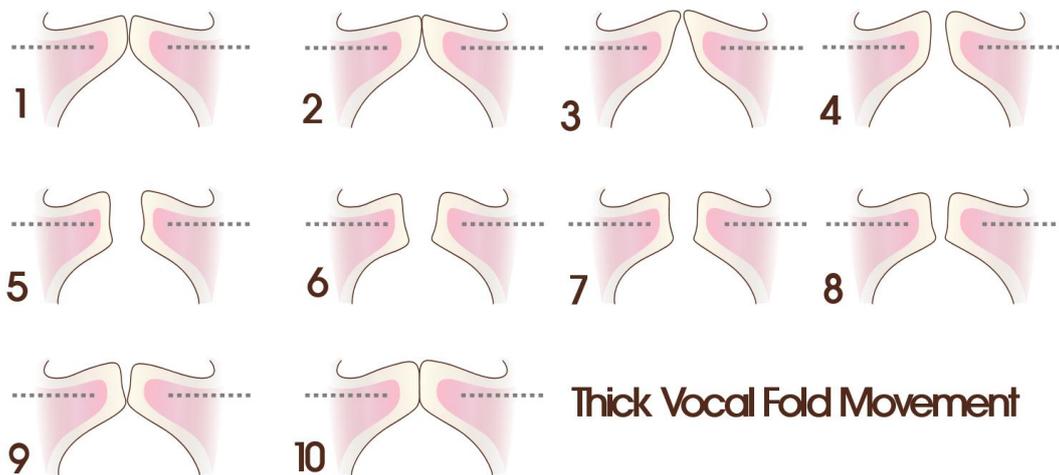
Within a vocalists note range are three major sub-ranges (aside from “falsetto” which requires a raised plane), primarily discernible by the change in tilt of the cricoid and/or thyroid – also known as the “voice box”. The lower range utilises the thick folds, and is commonly known as “chest voice”, whilst the upper range utilises the thin folds and is sometimes known as “head voice”. A more accurate description would be the “belt” or “speech” (lower) and the “cry” (upper). These are the terms we will continue to use here. The third range, “whistle”, is mostly used by advanced vocalists (like Mariah Carey and others) and is beyond the scope of our present topic. There are also advanced vocal techniques that we will not cover here in which elements of basic vocal positions are combined.



The “belt” voice primarily utilises thick vocal folds with tilted cricoid (see position 3 - orange). This gives the voice a heavier resonating sound. The “cry” voice primarily utilises thin vocal folds and tilted thyroid (see position 2 - pink) and gives the voice a sweeter, but not airy (such as in falsetto), resonating tone. However, this does not mean that the vocal folds are necessarily always set as stated before; you can use thickened folds when using “cry”, and thinned folds when using “speech”. Both vocal sets can be rich and full in sound.



Thin Vocal Fold Movement



Where the division happens in the vocalist's range varies from performer to performer, but a general zone where the vocal shift takes place can be categorised for the male and female performers.

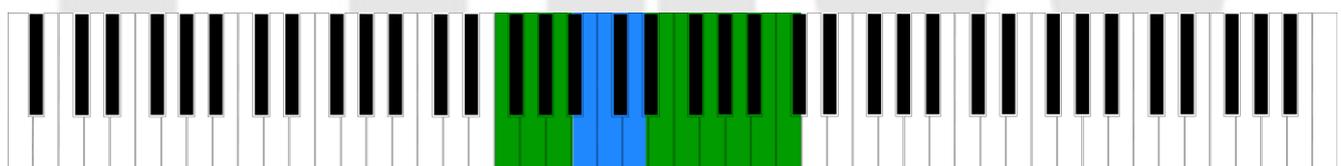
Adult Male vocal shift:

Generally happens about 2/3 of the way up from a male performer's lowest to highest notes.

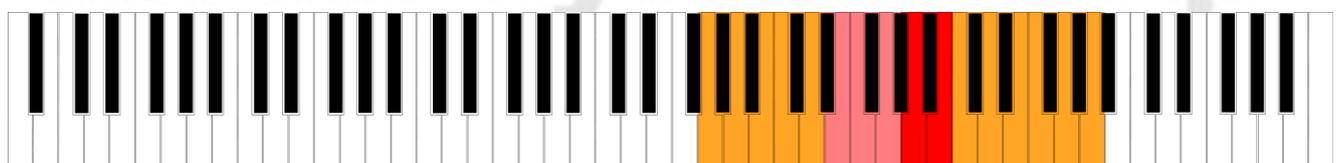
Adult Female vocal shift:

Generally happens about half way up from a female performer's lowest to highest notes.

Ranges vary somewhat, but the averages are shown below...



▲
Middle C



▲
Middle C

Just as a bodybuilder strengthens their arm or leg muscles, the muscles in the folds and supporting muscles responsible for vocal tone *can* be strengthened. They need to be worked. Many men (and some women) try to avoid using their “cry” voice because they think it sounds weak. Most likely it is; which is why it sounds that way. However, if it is to be strengthened, the vocalist must practice using the thin folds for development of sound and consequently build up that part of the voice. The opposite is true of those who have utilised their “cry” voice, and for whatever reason have not utilised their “belt” range for anything other than speaking.

When the use of thick and thin folds has both been strengthened, most likely there will be an overlap of what notes can be hit utilising the “cry” and the “belt”. This is the range that can allow vocal versatility in style and tone in a performance piece. Some trainers refer to this area of overlap as “the playground” – thus called because you can play around with switching vocal setups to achieve the best transitions from one to another in musical phrases. The larger the area of overlap, the more options a vocalist has for switching and for stylistic choices.

Application

Here are some exercises to strengthen your range and to gain flexibility in transition.

T H E “C R Y” P O S T U R E

Whine like a young child wanting something. “Mummy, why can’t I have sweeties? Oh no, it’s not fair”. Anchor the muscle at the back of the neck with facial anchoring, and raising the eyebrows sing in this vocal posture:

T H E “S P E E C H” P O S T U R E

Speak-sing this exercise to given notes so that the placement is not strained. The cricoid is not tilted (as in belt), but still remains in this position. Do not enter into the cry posture from the previous exercise as this is a completely different vocal setup. Only go as far as is comfortable, then repeat the exercise a few more times. As the pitch gets higher, remember to raise the larynx and retract the false vocal folds.

Y E A, B O O

“Yea” is to be sung in the speech set up, and “boo” in cry set up. A noticeable shift in the larynx should be felt between the two. Make it obvious to begin with, and then practice a more smooth transition.

T E A & J A M

Using the same switch from speech to cry, sing these words:

The image shows a musical score for a speech-to-cry transition exercise. It consists of two staves: a Female staff (treble clef) and a Male staff (bass clef). The lyrics are "Would you like some tea with bread and jam?". The score is divided into three sections: "Speech", "Cry", and "Speech". The "Speech" sections are marked with blue shading, and the "Cry" section is marked with orange shading. The lyrics are written below the notes, with "Would you" under the first speech section, "like some tea" under the cry section, and "with bread and jam?" under the second speech section.

Make the switch obvious to begin with, and then practice the transition smoothly.

Be Aware

As with all vocalisations and exercises, there is some risk of damage if one does not know what warning signs to look for.

- Always ensure you are properly hydrated whilst singing/exercising
- Make sure you have done at least a basic vocal warm-up
- If anything hurts, stop immediately.
- Whilst developing your setups, ensure you employ correct anchoring (see HiW training document, “Anchoring”) and false vocal fold retraction (known as the giggle posture – see HiW training document, “False Vocal Fold Retraction”)
- Place notes rather than push them.
- Stay tuned-in to your body’s signals and go as far as you can.
- For maximum results, see a vocal trainer who will be able to guide your development safely

For a complete set of vocal exercises with audio instruction, please visit our website and purchase a copy of the “Speech/Cry Transition” CD (available for male or female voice) from our Vocal Gym Series.

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