

DIY VOICE



A voice masculinization
resource zine

By Lichen

I've noticed that there is a shortage of content focused on voice masculinization because voice training is more common among transfems. Existing masculinization resources are scattered and hard to find. Hopefully, this zine presents a more cohesive look at voice masculinization. Disclaimer, I am not a medical expert or a professional voice coach in any way, just someone trying to learn about voices, and you should always pay attention to your well-being. This zine is not precisely scientific or focused on the biology of vocal cords, but rather discusses mental models to be more easily understood.

WARMING UP

before voice training is important because it relaxes the vocal cords and makes change easier.

POSTURE

Keep your back straight, chin level, and shoulders relaxed. This helps breath flow through the lungs and throat. Gently roll your neck back and forth to relax.

BREATHING

Take deep breaths from your diaphragm, in through the nose and out through the mouth, to relieve tension.

LIP TRILLS

Close your mouth while blowing air through your lips to make a buzzing, motor-like sound. For an extra challenge, do this while sliding pitch up and down.

SIRENS

Make an emergency siren sound by saying "oooo" and alternating between high and low notes.

HUMMING

Keeping your lips together, make humming noises while playing around with your pitch.

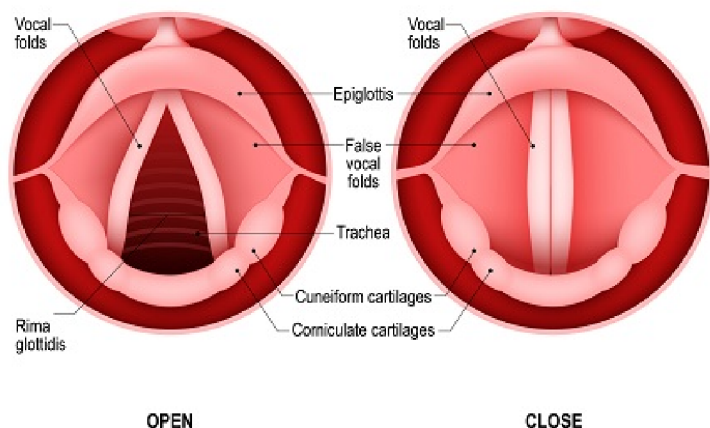
VOCAL WEIGHT

is a way to describe a voice's perceived lightness, heaviness, or rumbly/buzzy quality. It's also called "open/closed quotient" or "density". Heavy vocal weight is easier to reach at low pitches.

Vocal weight can be increased by sliding between pitches while keeping a low volume. Start with a natural pitch, then go as low as possible without going into vocal fry (sounding raspy or like a croaking frog).

Maintaining volume, slide back up and down. Repeat a couple of times.

Vocal weight doesn't necessarily mean being louder, so you don't need to shout. The goal is to achieve a rumble quality without letting out a lot of air, so it's not the same as screaming. Once you've reached a desired vocal weight from pitch sliding, try to talk while keeping the weight. Raise your pitch or talk from different pitches.



RESONANCE

is also known as timbre, or head/chest voice. It's the darkness or brightness of a voice. Think of it like the voice of a cartoon orc vs a really peppy character. Darker sounds usually come from the back of the mouth, while bright voices seem like they come from the front of the mouth.

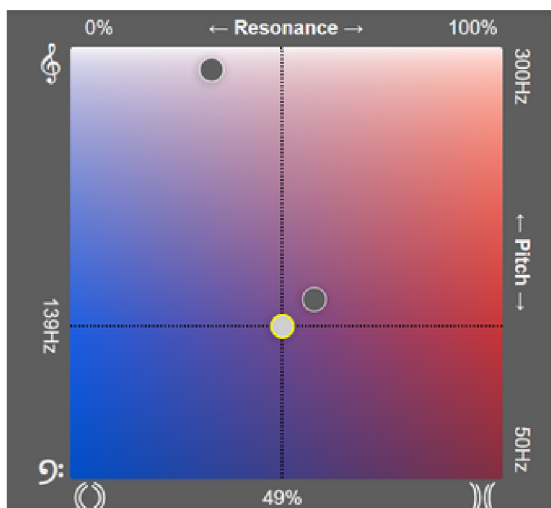
Resonance depends on the size or shape of the space a sound passes through. This is the vocal tract, the container of air from the nose down to the vocal folds/cords. Feel the space in your mouth by puffing out your cheeks like a frog.

Yawning is also a good example of what talking with darker resonance might feel like. It raises the soft palate and lowers the tongue, creating more space in your mouth.

Darker resonance is found in "oo" and "ah" vowel sounds, while "ee" and "ih" are brighter. Take in the feel of your mouth as you pronounce rounder vowels. The tongue will move back and down. Keep that same sensation while saying other words.

Alternatively, hum and feel where the sound is vibrating from. Place a hand over your rib cage and try to drop the origin of the hum lower.

A fun tool for visualizing resonance is <http://acousticgender.space/>. It maps audio files onto a pitch vs resonance graph, with the left representing darker resonance. It is not perfect, but it might be insightful for seeing where your voice is currently at.



PITCH

is not as important as you might think. When people assign genders to voices, they consider many other factors like vocal weight and pronunciation patterns. Voices can be high but read as masculine- think Mickey Mouse.

PITCH INTUITIVE PRACTICE

For this exercise, avoid too much conscious effort. Start at a pitch that's entirely comfortable for you. Go a tiny bit lower. This pitch should still be easy to reach, but slightly lower than your usual speaking patterns. Say anything you want.

Draw out the last words of each sentence while lowering the pitch. This is your new base pitch for starting the next sentence. Let your voice gradually descend. When you've totally comfortable there, repeat the exercise, starting at a lower pitch. Be aware of any strain, because forcing your voice too low can cause fatigue and damage.

DROPPING THE LARYNX

During a yawn, the vocal tract expands and the larynx (voice box) lowers. Practice talking in the morning when your voice is naturally lower. Drink some water to hydrate. Repeat "ah" or "om" sounds, lowering the pitch each time.

MIMICRY

Copying a voice that you want to have can lead to a more precise transition. It will provide an example to compare against and help with identifying speech patterns. Also, you can absorb microbehaviors, which are the tiny details of a voice that are difficult to copy consciously. Find a 2-5 second clip of a voice you admire. Without overanalyzing, trying to duplicate the voice- every aspect of it.

When searching for a clip, consider what type of voice you want. Will it be bright? With a slight rasp? Bold and confident? Soft and soothing?

There are many possibilities, and it may be overwhelming, so here are some ways to find a clip of a voice target:

- Celebrity interviews, WIRED has quite a few
- voicefinder.tumblr.com has voice claims for characters and a tagging system for personality and accents
- Character voice claim videos
- Video game character dialogue recordings
- voquent.com has clips from many voice actors

MISCELLANEOUS VOCAL PATTERNS

Voices don't necessarily have a "gender"- your voice is your own. However, these are some speech patterns that you can replicate if you want.

NASALITY

Changing your larynx position can change your nasality. This might lead to sounding congested. While making vowel sounds like "ah", there does not need to be vibration through the nose. If there is no difference between humming sounds and open vowels, you might have a nasal pronunciation. On the other hand, to be more nasal, practice saying nasally words with "n" and "m", using heavy emphasis.

EH/UH VOWEL REPLACEMENT

In words with short "i" or "e" sounds, lean slightly toward short "u" sounds.

RANGE

Masculine voices tend to be more monotone than feminine ones. Of course, your voice can still be expressive and engaging, but incorporating this speech pattern might be useful.

INFLECTION

When emphasizing a word, raise your volume or draw out the word instead of making your voice higher.

CONSONANT ARTICULATION

Pronounce "s" and "sh" sounds with lower pitch to make them sound darker or heavier.

VOCAL FRY

Dropping occasionally into vocal fry can make you sound relaxed or even commanding, but be careful not to overdo it. It can sound forced and hurt your voice. Try not to use vocal fry at the end of sentences, as this can sound less confident.

ENDING SENTENCES

Besides vocal fry, ending sentences with a rising tone, as if asking a question, can also make you sound doubtful.

Consider ending with descending intonation or steady vocal weight.

PRACTICING SAFELY

1.SORENESS

If you feel any physical pain, stop. Training takes effort but should never hurt you. Also do not physically squeeze or shift your throat; instead, let your throat muscles naturally do that for you.

2.HYDRATE

Drinking around 3-4 liters of water each day is important for vocal hygiene.

3.TAKE YOUR TIME

It's okay if you don't see a lot of progress at first. Change comes gradually. Persist through your struggles, and don't beat yourself up over getting stuck.

Let yourself rest, and don't talk too much with difficult vocal characteristics. Be sure to take breaks!

4.SHORTEN PRACTICES

Use your target voice in 10-30 second bursts and practice frequently, rather than practicing in long sessions and rarely doing it. Consistency is key.

5.OTHER FACTORS

Smoking and secondhand smoke inhalation can lead to larynx damage. Exposure to allergies can impact your vocal cords, and allergy medications can have adverse side effects. Acid reflux can harm your voice too. Remember to take care of yourself.

RESOURCES

TRANS VOCAL TRAINING (YouTube)
Playlists for voice
masculinization, many exercises,
transgender voice coach.

TRANS VOICE (transvoice.party/#)
List of introductory resources,
online communities, and advice.

THE VOICE BOOK FOR TRANS AND
NON-BINARY PEOPLE
(transreads.org)
In-depth book with tons of
practice exercises.

SUMIAN VOICE
(wiki.sumianvoice.com)
Very transfem focused, highly
technical, also has youtube
channel.

TRANSVOCAL (TikTok)

Videos addressing specific questions and goals, voice teacher.

RENEE YOXON (reneeyoxon.com)

Free resources, practice ideas, TikTok account has voice masculinization playlist, voice teacher.

I hope this zine has been
helpful to you!

