

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE FEUCHTINGER METHOD

FREE LESSON



GROOVE AGAINST RESISTANCE! EXERCISES

With this lesson, we have come to the most important exercise for the tongue and really to the last tongue exercise as well. Many other important exercises will follow, but all the exercises that have been given and that are still to come center around the tongue, or, to be more exact, around that mysterious pair of muscles, “the hyo-glossi.”

I am sure, from the feedback I have received, that many of my students have succeeded in developing a very good voice even now, through the study of the exercises given in other lessons of “**The Ultimate Guide to the Feuchtinger Method**”. Some are even more enthusiastic than I want them to be, because the hardest work is still ahead, but also the greatest promise, the brightest vocal future.

The past free lesson must have given you considerable command of the tongue and that has helped you as it was intended to do. But as has been frequently pointed out in the lesson, and as will be made still more plain in future lessons in the Ultimate Guide, especially when we come to the lessons on “Vocal Physics,” the laws of “Resonance and Sound, “great strength is demanded and needed to reach the full glory of the human voice.

MAKE SURE YOU MASTER THE TONGUE GROOVE EXERCISE BEFORE PROCEEDING TO THIS EXERCISE!!!

So far we have planted the seed. It has sprouted. It has grown and is now in bloom, but the fruit is still to come. To make the fruit sound and sweet and to reap a rich harvest, you must help me with all your might. Upon **you alone** will depend the future growth of your voice, because that growth will be determined by the amount of practice you can or will intelligently do. You have reached the point now where you should use all available time, and practice with the utmost persistence till the full strength has been reached.

To strengthen the all important hyo-glossi muscle some way had to be discovered to give it resistance - some hold - some grip against which it could contract.

If you merely shut your hand, the finger muscles are not fully contracting because they find no resistance , but if you grip a baseball, then, indeed, your hand can grip with all the power it has.

By pushing the thumb upward against the under jaw some resistance was given the hyo-glossi muscle, but this resistance was not direct enough. In order that the hyo-glossi muscle be given a **firm** support, the tongue must be held up during the silent practice in an artificial way, namely by placing the thumb inside of the mouth and under the tongue. After that process has been learned, the student may use the tongue support which will be sent with a later lesson.

The student must realize that in speaking and in singing the upper part of the tongue is held up by the stylo-glossi muscles. The muscle which extends from the styloid bone into the tongue is the muscle in question. It holds the tongue upward in speaking and singing, thereby giving the hyo—glossi muscles directly under it the resistance or hold which they need. But by practicing silently, we eliminate all muscles, except the hyo-glossi, therefore we must give the tongue an artificial hold against which the hyo-glossi muscles can pull.

CONTRACTING THE HYO-GLOSSUS MUSCLE AGAINST RESISTANCE

Demosthenes, it is related, at first had a very poor voice, a halting, stammering voice that he was ashamed of, and yet he eventually became the greatest orator of his time, When, he stood on the seashore or on the mountain top and practiced his orations with a pebble under his tongue, he was using, without possessing a knowledge of laryngology, the right method of developing a strong, full and agreeable voice. Without knowing it, he was affording a strong point of resistance to the hyoid muscle. Against this resistance the muscle was forced to contract and, in doing so, gained strength and flexibility.

THE TONGUE AND THUMB

First: Place your right thumb under the right side of your tongue, laying the fleshy side against: the teeth. To do this you must bend the hand inward (not outward) at the wrist. Next pass the thumb along under the tongue until its end touches the last tooth. See Figure 23. During this exercise the tongue must remain relaxed and quiet. Now extend the fingers and turn the hand slowly until they pass the nose and the palm is turned upward. Naturally the thumb under the tongue turned with the hand, so that now the tongue rests on the side of the thumb, See Figure 24. Always be sure that the tongue remains soft and lies as far as possible in its natural position. Next, press the thumb against the inner side of the tongue, forcing it toward the center until it can go no further. About half of the tongue will now be resting on the

thumb, which is now pressing against the “hyo-glossi” muscle. This muscle extends from the side of the tongue backward and downward to the hyoid bone and is the muscle we must strengthen.



Fig. 23

It is advisable to repeat this exercise until the thumb can be placed under the tongue without forcing the tongue out of its natural position. The entire half of the tongue from back to front must rest upon the thumb. You may have some difficulty at first in keeping the tongue loose and natural, and be tempted to draw it back or move it forward to make room for the thumb. But all such movements must be avoided, as they detract from the desired results.

Second: When the exercise described above is thoroughly understood and the thumb can with ease be brought into the correct position, extend the exercise to include the following:



Fig. 24

With the thumb lift the tongue about one - third of an inch or less, being careful that the **entire** length is lifted and not only a part. The thumb must remain horizontal and the whole hand be raised a little. Again be quite sure that the tongue rests loosely and naturally on the thumb without exerting any pressure upon the thumb. Repeat this exercise as frequently as possible.

These two exercises are only by way of preparation for what is to follow, but they must be mastered before it is possible to advance further. If the tongue is even the least bit stiff, the muscles which stretch the vocal chords cannot function, or at best, only with great difficulty, for they find too much resistance. For example if the tip of the tongue is hard and stiff it shows that the “musculi genio-glossi” are active and are dragging the hyoid and “stylo-glossi” muscles forward, thus forcing the tongue out of its natural position. The purpose of these exercises is to train only those muscles which stretch the vocal chords, without allowing the other muscles to interfere. It is only by complete isolation that these muscles can be trained and brought under control.

These exercises may be practiced on either the right or the left side of the tongue or on both sides alternately, as may be convenient. At first use the mirror to notice that

the tongue is not drawn backward, when the thumb is under it. Later you can do it without the mirror.

GROOVE AGAINST THUMB RESISTANCE

Third: Place the thumb under your tongue as previously instructed, and raise the tongue by turning the hand partially around until the thumb rests on its side. Then picture the tongue as resting softly and quietly upon the thumb, and try to form the groove in the easiest way. If the groove will not form, assist the process by using the forefinger of the other hand; that is, while you hold thumb under the tongue, also touch or tickle the tipper surface of the tongue, to induce the groove; it is advisable to do this anyhow for some time, until the groove can be easily formed. When the groove is correctly formed, the under part of the tongue swells and spreads sideways and downward and you will feel the under surface of the tongue pressing down on the thumb. Remember, the less exertion you use in forming the groove, the better and more quickly it will be accomplished. In fact, the mind alone should compel the groove to form. See Figure 24. The groove should be deeper than it was possible to show in this figure.

The sideways and downward swelling of the under surface of the tongue is caused by the contraction of the hyoid muscle. As long as the tongue remains quiet, this muscle is lax and hidden, but as the muscle contracts it becomes thicker; this explains the swelling and the slight pressure on the thumb.



Explanation: When the tongue is raised by the thumb, the hyo-glossus muscle is also raised; the thumb gives it a support and supplies the necessary resistance against which it can contract. But as the upper end of the muscle which is attached to the tongue, is prevented by the thumb from drawing the tongue downward, the lower end of the muscle which is attached to the horns of the hyoid bone must draw the horns upward. In this position the front part of the hyoid bone is tilted downward and the horns raised upward.

You can easily prove this for yourself by placing a finger under the front of the hyoid bone just under the jaw, and feeling the swelling against the finger.

DRAWING THE TONGUE BACK

Fourth: Place the thumb under the tongue as before. With a finger of the other hand touch the tongue very lightly both at the tip and at the back near the throat, to make sure that the tongue is quite soft and lax. Then draw the whole tongue back about a quarter of an inch. This must be done very gently so that the thumb under it does not feel the slightest pressure. While drawing the tongue back and also after it is drawn back, touch it repeatedly to make sure that the upper surface remains as lax as before. In all these exercises the tongue must remain soft. That is the fundamental condition to success. This exercise is given merely to show you the tendency of the

tongue to shorten, during the formation of the groove, and it need not be repeated once you understand the action.

ISOLATING THE TONGUE

It must be emphasized again that in all the exercises, care must be taken that only the hyoid muscle is exercised, for any assistance on the part of the other muscles will delay its growth and deprive it of strength. When you have become accustomed to the exercise with the thumb and are **sure** that the groove is always formed far back, as well as in the center, lay the fore- finger under the cricoid cartilage and the thumb of the other hand under the tongue, and be sure that the cricoid cartilage remains in the natural position while the groove in the tongue is formed and the tongue is relaxed again.



It is very important that the pressure of the tongue be felt especially on the end of the thumb and not only in the middle, as frequently occurs.

THE HYOID BONE STROKE

Lay the forefinger under the hyoid bone in the angle made by the chin and throat and then form the tongue groove, first without the finger, then with the little finger and then with the thumb and notice that the front of the hyoid bone strikes the finger each

time that you make the groove. See Figure 26. Next, speak the vowel a, e, i, o, u. With each vowel the hyoid bone will involuntarily strike against the finger. If the hyoid bone rises toward the throat cavity, that is proof that the all-important hyoid muscle is too weak and that it still needs much exercise.

In spite of what I have said against drawing the whole larynx up or clown, a certain downward stroke of the hyoid bone is not only permissible but absolutely necessary in a large tone, and this stroke occurs automatically as soon as the tongue has gained sufficient strength.

To avoid misunderstanding, I wish to state that it is very easy to lower the hyoid by means of the throat muscles, but this is injurious. As mentioned above, a downward stroke of the hyoid bone against the finger is noticeable, and yet the hyoid bone is not drawn downward. Just the opposite is the case. The horns are drawn upward and the bone is tilted, therefore the front strikes downward without really being lowered. The action somewhat resembles the balance beam of a druggist's scale; when one side goes down, the other goes up, but the center of pivotal point remains at rest.

This is not an exercise which you need to practice. It is merely a test to show you that the hyoid bone can be moved either by the tongue muscles, which is the right way, or by the throat muscles, which is the wrong way. If it does not move, you are still tensing the palate muscles while making the groove, if you drop the upper part of the tongue loosely enough in the middle and near the throat, then the palate will remain still.

You must master all these points. Continue practicing until you do master them.

Fifth: Having succeeded in making the groove without moving either the cricoids cartilage or the palate, that is the uvula, place a little finger under the tongue, near its center, as taught in earlier lessons.

Again make the groove, testing once and a while the cricoid cartilage, and observing also that the palate does not move. Notice that every time you make the groove while the little finger is under the tongue, that you feel a "beat" or soft pressure of the underside of the tongue against the finger. That is the correct and "infallible" attack.

Sixth: Count or read aloud and notice that every time you feel this beat, the voice is strong, clear and good.

Singers should sing the scale, starting about B flat on the third line. Every time they feel the “beat,” if magic with utmost ease as taught in groove without voice), the tone is strong, good and easy. Now they will arrive at a note, usually about F on fifth line, when the beat is not felt and the tone is less good or the throat is not free and easy. That is a **sure** sign that they have reached the present limit of their strength. To reach the upper notes, this strength has to be increased.

In order that this strength may be increased, the hyo-glossi muscle must contract against a resistance, and for this purpose the thumb is placed all along the entire half of the under surface of the tongue, as far back as the lower wisdom teeth. It may take some of you several days to become accustomed to placing the thumb under the tongue and to holding it there while the tongue lies loosely and quietly upon it. A few of you may have a very thick thumb, too thick to pass under the tongue; these should use the forefinger of the opposite hand and lay it far back under the tongue.

Seventh: Having acquired this exercise, simply make the groove in the manner so often described. Notice that the back part of the tongue, gently, easily falls or presses down upon the tip of the thumb or finger. Once in a while test the cricoid cartilage to see that it does not move while you are making the groove.

Many will be tempted to press down with the tip of the tongue. That must be avoided at all costs. The front part of the tongue **must remain** loose. This is especially important as you gain more and more strength. Keep the front part of the tongue loose as long as you practice; **this is imperative.**

Most of you will be tempted to press down hard with the tongue. Do just the opposite. Merely let your tongue drop loosely on the thumb. Let it rest there a second and then relax, when the tongue will jump to its natural straight position.

Remember the lesson on the jaw muscles. If you press down hard with the tongue, you are really contracting the jaw and not the tongue.

Eight: Practice this lesson with the thumb under the tongue as much as you can. You have reached the all-important point now. Do not cease practicing. Keep at it every time you get a chance. The end will richly repay all your trouble. Do not be afraid of over - taxing the hyo-glossi muscle now. It cannot be injured. You may get tired or even a little sore, but that will disappear. Any muscle that is being exercised may get tired or even sore at first.

If you only make the groove **easily** enough, you can do yourself no harm. Be sure that the thumb is always clean and that the nail is short, so as not to scratch the tongue.

I have had students who made the groove against thumb resistance 7,000 times daily. This may seem to take very much time, but it can in reality be done in less than two hours. Do what you can, is all I ask.

If you were standing on ice, hardly thick enough to hold your weight, and you were to try to hold an additional weight of ten pounds only, the ice would break and you would disappear in the water. But if the ice were thick and strong you could assume considerable additional weight without fear of breaking through.

If your tongue is weak, it cannot resist the pull of the other muscles and breaks down under the strain. You must wait until the ice (the hyo-glossi muscles) is strong and then your voice will be strong, beautiful and free.

First get accustomed to the groove against thumb. The thumb support is just as good as the mechanical support.

If you wish, you can use a mechanical object, such as a fork. The tongue support, or fork, must be inserted under the tongue so that it lies easily in the mouth. After you are accustomed to holding this under the tongue, hold the stem firmly in one hand and hold it so that the tongue is lifted about one-third of an inch or less. Hold it in that position while you make the groove as taught. It is exactly the same exercise as with the thumb under the tongue, so if you prefer to use the thumb only, you may do so. If you feel that it is easier to use the index finger you can use that as well.

Everybody needs this exercise. It is the only perfect way of strengthening the tongue and through it the throat.

Gradually this exercise will become automatic and will assert itself during voice.

You can send your comments to contact@singingvoicelessons.org – Looking forward to hear from you!