

# Falsetto Register

The falsetto register arises where the vocal fold muscle, *vocalis*, can no longer withstand the force that is stretching the vocal folds. The outer edge starts to vibrate and the vocal folds are stretched hard. When the **entire** vocalis is no longer contracted the body of the note disappears and it become falsetto like or thin. It is logical to conclude that the activity of the vocalis is what gives a note its body although this is yet to be scientifically proven. I even toyed with the idea of calling the chest register the “Vocalis register” but decided that introducing yet another term in this field may simply be adding to the confusion. The falsetto register involves another dominant muscle group, the cricothyroid or CT muscles. This muscle group is the dominant group even at low volumes. In practice one can say that:

- When we sing in the falsetto register the CT muscles are especially active.
- When we sing softly the CT muscles are especially active.
- When we sing in the chest register the vocalis is especially active.
- When we sing loudly the vocalis is especially active.

To summarise: In the area of our vocal range where both the chest and falsetto registers can be used it is usually volume that determines which register is dominant.

Men seldom use their falsetto registers. This may be because the falsetto register is perceived as feminine which is usually the last thing boys want to be. Most men only use their falsetto registers when laughing loudly. The falsetto register rarely comes into play in the daily use of their voices and when they begin vocal training they will often try to avoid using it. This is understandable as they don't know how to use it and the sound produced is often unsatisfactory. However, for those who want to develop their singing voice the falsetto register can be a wonderful asset awakening previously unknown nuances and dynamic richness. So for those who are willing to work on it can be well worth the effort. There are many examples of rock, pop and soul singers using this register with great skill. Certain hard rock singers use it when they “scream”, something that was particularly popular in the 70's and 80's. However, for most of us the falsetto register remains one that is used in combination with the chest register when we feel the need to introduce dynamic nuances.

It is more difficult for women to discern the difference between their registers and therefore when they start vocal training they will need to make quite radical volume shifts particularly in the middle of their range.

Men on the other hand can discern their falsetto register more easily and will also have an easier time bringing it down into the middle of their range. Some singers feel that they use less support when they go from chest register to falsetto register. This is probably due to the fact that lung pressure is usually lower when singing falsetto. Hopefully you will now have at least some idea of the forces involved.

## Exercise – Falsetto “shEE”

This exercise descends in pitch. It is important to resist the urge to go over to your chest register in the lower part of your range.

The image shows a musical exercise on a single staff in treble clef. The exercise is divided into two phrases. The first phrase, labeled 'shEE . . .', consists of three measures: a whole note chord (Dm), a quarter note descending scale (G11), and a half note (Am). The second phrase, labeled 'hOO . . .', consists of three measures: a quarter note (FΔ), a quarter note descending scale (G), and a half note (A). The exercise concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.