

The  
*3 Ways to Last Through Your Phrase*  
Course  
Side Breathing

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# Side Breathing

For this session, let's notice what it's like to breathe into the sides of the body.

**For this exercise, you'll need:**

1. A comfortable place to lie down on your side,
2. A pillow to rest your head,
3. A few books and
4. A reusable grocery bag (needs to handle the weight of several books).

The following exercise has several benefits. If you have any habitual holding patterns in the abdomen that prevent steady and easy flow of the air it's easier to detect this way. It also will help you feel what it's like to hold back your air with your BODY vs your throat. Of course, you can hold your breath by closing your cords, but that's not the most comfortable or healthy way to breathe for singing. We want to slow down the air because the ribs and all the muscles around the torso are not releasing or pushing the air out too quickly, not because throat tension is totally blocking easy airflow.

When you feel The Hold at the ribs, it gives you a great sense of how to use your body to hold back the air.

**Why lie down with this exercise?**

It's important to do this exercise lying down because you will be able to distinguish that from the tension patterns that are necessary for standing up, as well as any unnecessary tension patterns you have as an individual with standing.

The other reason for lying down is to use gravity to your advantage, to feel movement that is driven by gravity pressing down on you vs movement coming from muscular effort.

You'll also want your head resting either on the ground or on a pillow, so that there is not a lot of tension in the neck or head.

For your bag of books, experiment with how heavy you make the bag. It needs to be heavy enough that you can feel a good amount of pressure but not so much that you can't wield the bag around or feel pain.

## **The Passive Exhale on Side Exercise:**

**Step 1:** Lay down on the floor on your side with the bag of books nearby and pillow ready.

**Step 2:** Hoist the bag of books onto your side.

**Step 3:** Breathe in. Feel the weight of the books moving the air out of your ribs.

Now notice the pressure of gravity against your ribs. You'll notice that if you release your air, the bag of books will sink farther down and "help" your ribs move with the air. This is a great way to feel what it's like to let gravity allow for a release of air through the ribs, vs pushing the air or locking.

## **Active Inhale on Side Exercise**

**Step 1:** Breathe in through the nose and lift the bag of books with your ribs.

**Step 2:** Notice how you can use a little muscular effort in the ribs to lift the bag of books. Notice how you can give in to gravity to release the air.

### **A Variation:**

You can remove the bag, lift the arm up, and notice how the ribs go up quite high on your torso and you can make space for the air there. Now hoist the bag farther up on your ribs to also feel that with the help of gravity.

Now let's notice what it's like to slow down our exhale by keeping the books lifted as you exhale.

## **Rib Lift on Exhale Exercise**

**Step 1:** Breathe in, expanding the ribs

**Step 2:** Release the air out slowly by keeping some resistance at the ribs so that the books descend more slowly.

**Bonus Variations:** You can also use “The Hold” with the ribs so you feel what that’s like. Then try the Slow Release, letting go of the air slowly. Now try the Siphon, where you breathe out but move the books outwards.

### **When You Would Use this Exercise:**

Doing this exercise alone is helpful for your nervous system to experience a different way of breathing. Your nervous system is always learning in the background, so as long as you are experiencing different (and positive/not painful) movements in your breathing, your singing often will be influenced by this. The effect is especially noticeable directly after working with the exercises and jumping into a song.

This exercise is also helpful if you have built up unhelpful tension or soreness in your throat when working with challenging songs or exercises. On occasions where you don’t have normal voice functioning (like bad allergies, sickness, coughs, etc) this is a great way to be working on breathing without using your voice.

You can also use this exercise to also discover any unhelpful habits you can release in your singing. So if you sing for 30min and notice that your throat is feeling tight, you can work with this exercise and you may notice “Oh, I wasn’t really allowing my ribs to move!” Or “Oh, I was really pushing there, let me feel the slow release again”.

You can also use these exercises as a warm up to help you tune in to your body and encourage easy and free breathing for singing.

