

# Find your diaphragm!



1. Stand up straight, feet shoulder width apart. Put your left hand on your stomach. Breathe in fully, slowly, to the count of four, making sure you don't raise your shoulders. As you breathe in, your stomach should fill out. Hold for four. Breathe out slowly to the count of four—your stomach should shrink as this happens.

2. With your left hand still on your stomach, hold up the index finger of your right hand in front of your mouth. Pretend your finger is a candle, and quickly blow it out. You should feel a muscle in your stomach sharply contract. This is your diaphragm! It is the power muscle for singers, wind instrumentalists, runners, and professional speakers. Whenever you need air, stamina, and volume without wearing out your vocal chords, it is vital that you are breathing from your diaphragm and using this muscle to push out the air, instead of straining neck muscles and vocal chords. The neck, shoulders and jaw should always be relaxed. If you are nervous, use it to your advantage—put all the butterflies into your diaphragm and use your nervous energy to power the diaphragm, rather than tensing up other areas of the body.

Whenever you think of it during the day, practice the first exercise regularly, until it becomes a natural way to breathe. Whether you are speaking, working out, singing, or playing your instrument you will find that you won't tire quite so quickly.