

Foundations for Success

*Technical Training
for the Young Bassoonist*

Cheryl Ann Huddleston

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Technical Training for the Young Bassoonist

I. Choosing the Right Player

Network of support around the student – the right parents, the right band director, the right private instructor.

- ❖ The right parents: Look for proactive leaders, people who are very involved , encouraging and motivating with their children.
- ❖ The right band director: Attract the right kinds of private instructors by openly communicating on a regular basis about each child's progress. Support the instructor with help in reinforcing unified goals and ideas and helping with parent communication.
- ❖ The right private instructor: Find young professionals who are interested in encouraging each child to achieve his/ her potential. Put together a list of interview questions that reflect your personal teaching style and goals.

II. Getting the Right Start

- ❖ Hold the bassoon correctly – How to put the instrument in the child's hands.
- ❖ The bassoon embouchure –
Be consistent during the first few weeks.
Encourage practice in front of a mirror.
Develop the low range before moving over the break.
- ❖ The Wiggle Down the Bassoon Game –
Two part exercise to develop embouchure flexibility.
Address the left thumb technique.
- ❖ The Tongue Down the Bassoon Game –
Two part exercise that encourages low register response and embouchure flexibility.
- ❖ Crossing the Break –
The half hole notes.

- ❖ The Flick Notes –
Develop proper thumb technique.
- ❖ The Tenor Register –
Good pitch and a strong sound in the high register.
- ❖ Allowing vibrato to evolve naturally – a vocal approach.

III. Correct Fingerings

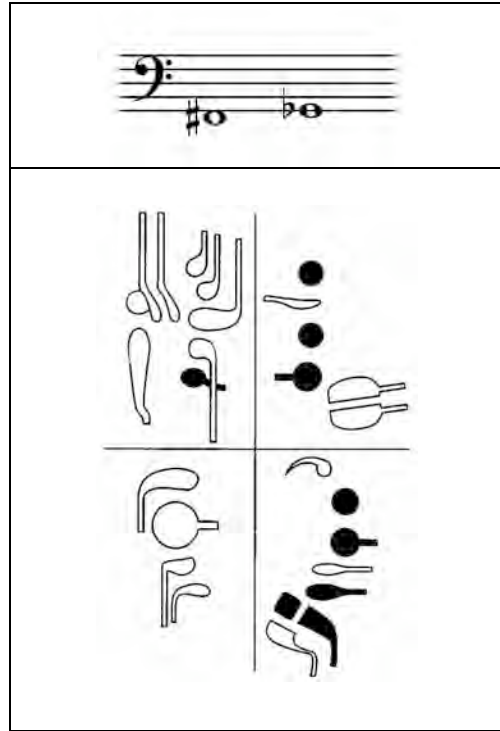
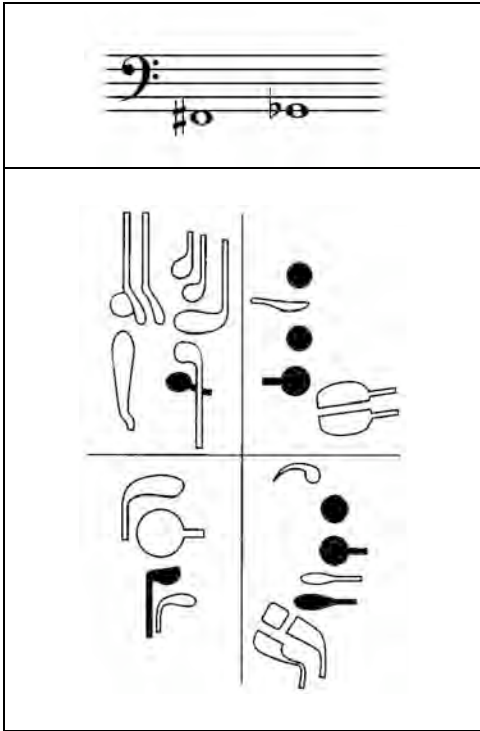
Low F#/Gb
 The Middle C# - The scooting, rolling thumb, smooth facility
 The Magic Eb
 Middle F#/Gb
 The Little Finger G – The F rest G rest game
 The Flick Notes – A, Bb ,B, C
 The full C#/ Db
 The High E and F Little Finger

IV. The Bassoon Reed

- ❖ The bassoon sound and its relationship to the reed
- ❖ Find a reed that is responsive and pitch stable

VI. Multidimensional Musical Growth of Young Bassoonists

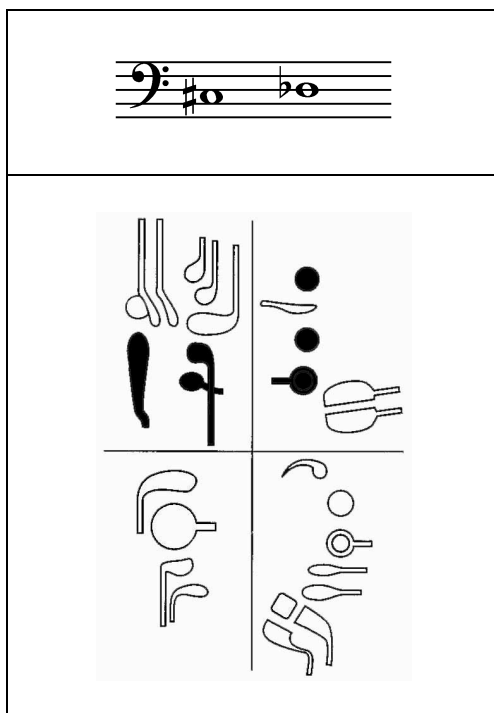
- ❖ The well balanced and blended section.
- ❖ An educated perspective – the importance of orchestral playing and attending important performances.



Low F# / Gb

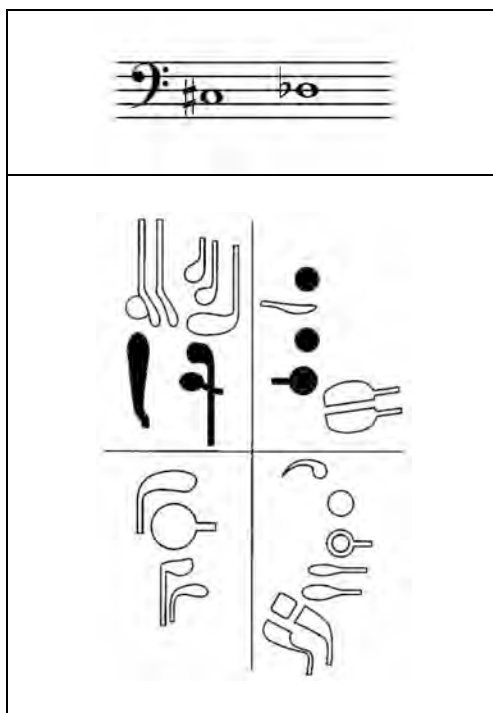
Above are the two ways young bassoonists should first be introduced to the fingering for low F# / Gb. The thumb F#, which is indicated on the left, is best for scales that use F# / Gb followed by G# / Ab. In other words, you should encourage the student to use this fingering in the Db, Gb, E, A and B scales. It is also a good fingering to use in the chromatic scale.

Students should be equally adept at using the fingering on the right that requires the use of the pinky instead of the thumb. This option is lower in pitch and even in tone quality with the surrounding notes.



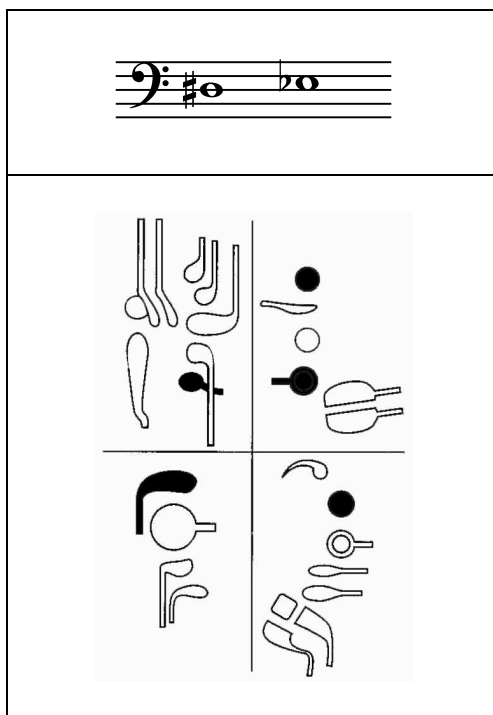
The Sliding Thumb: C#/Db

When young bassoonists first learn the C# / Db in the staff, they need to learn how to coordinate the left thumb in a smooth motion. In order to slur or smoothly connect to this note, it is important to roll the thumb from the whisper key to cover all three thumb keys of the C# / Db fingering without lifting the thumb. This is usually difficult at first, but learning to control the thumb is a very important part of bassoon playing since we have nine keys for the left thumb!



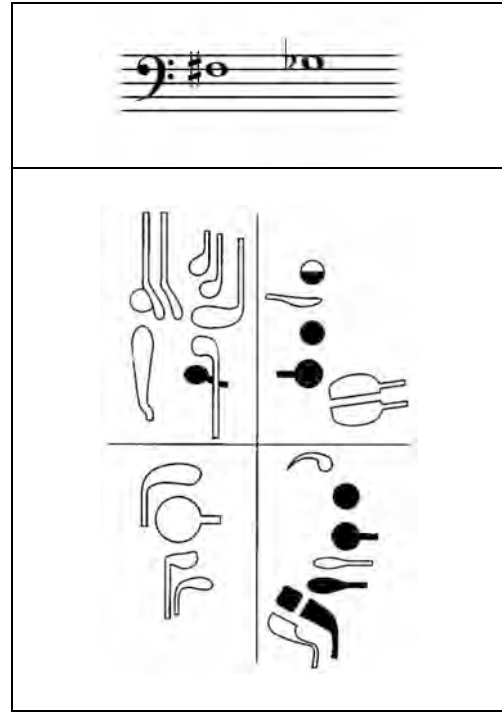
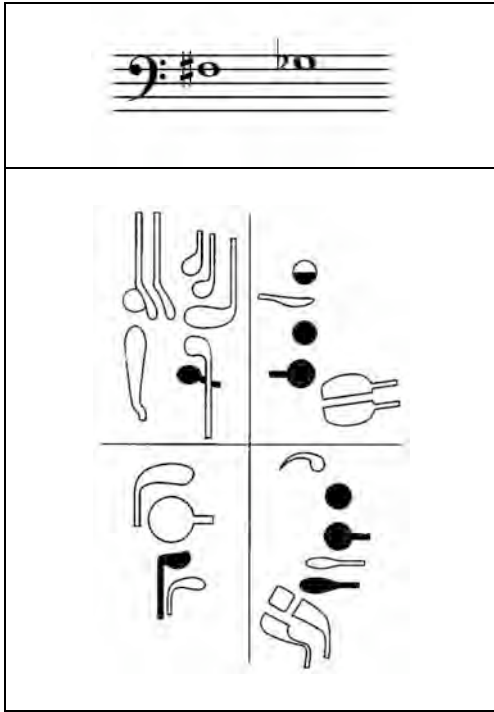
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The Magic Eb

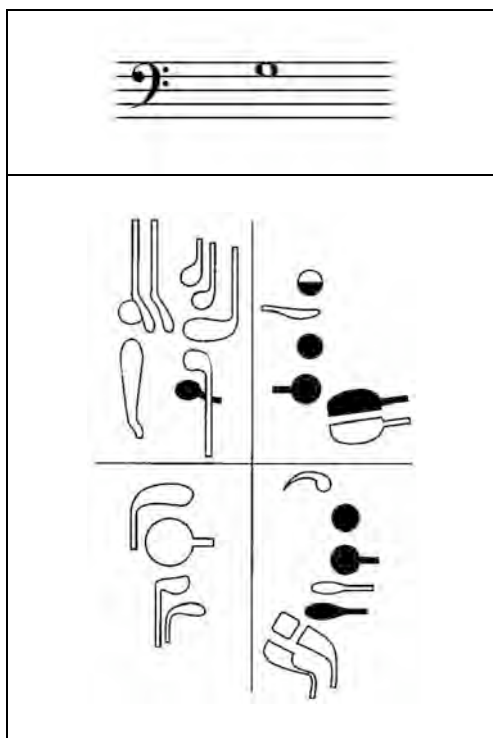
I call this fingering “Magic Eb” because it is always the most pitch stable, and a silly name helps my students to remember an otherwise complicated fingering. Many bassoon fingering charts in band method books contain misinformation and this fingering is often represented incorrectly.



The Half-Hole Notes: F#/Gb

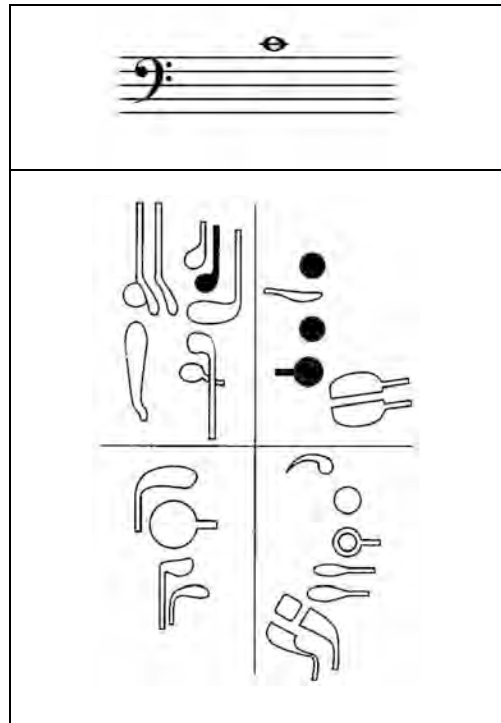
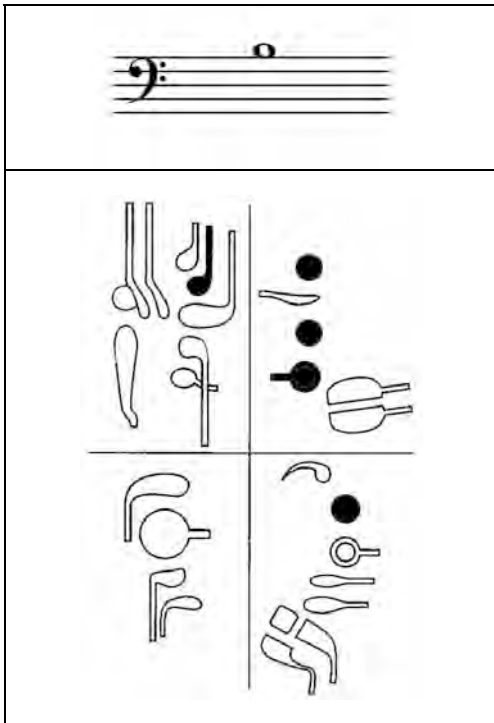
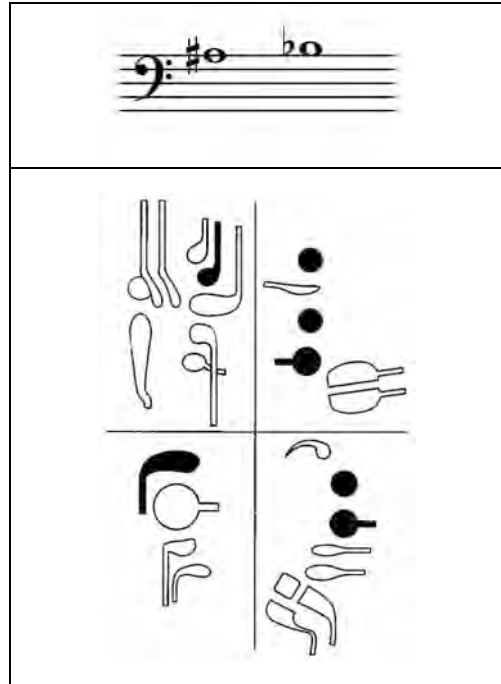
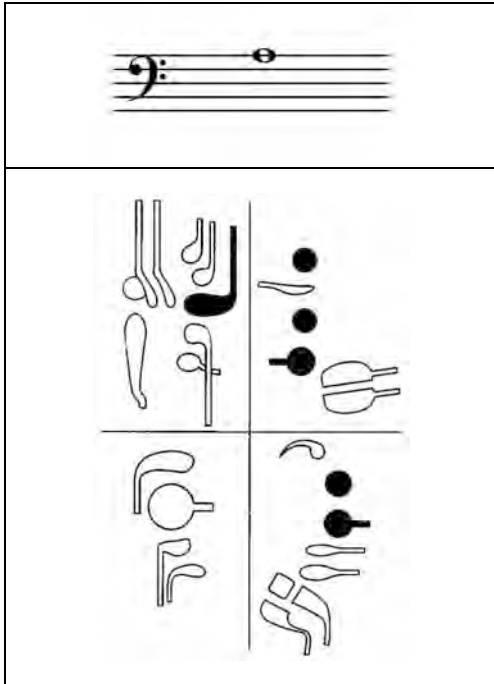
The F# / Gb in the staff is problematic for young bassoon players because of the half-hole in the first finger of the left hand. More mature and advanced young players will learn how to control the break of the instrument without making “fracking” sounds. Clean response of the half-hole notes is determined by the accuracy of the first finger.

Like the low register F# / Gb, the thumb fingering option should be used in the Db, Gb, E, A, B and chromatic scales. The pinky F# / Gb is the most preferable for reasons of pitch and tone quality.



The Half-Hole Notes: G

The G in the staff is one of the sharpest notes on the bassoon. The way to lower the pitch of this note is to add the little finger of the left hand. Students may sometimes resist this because they soon discover the note will respond if they do not use the pinky. This shortcut will cause the G to stick out in lyrical passages. Learning this fingering correctly will help the child's technique develop more smoothly as they progress.



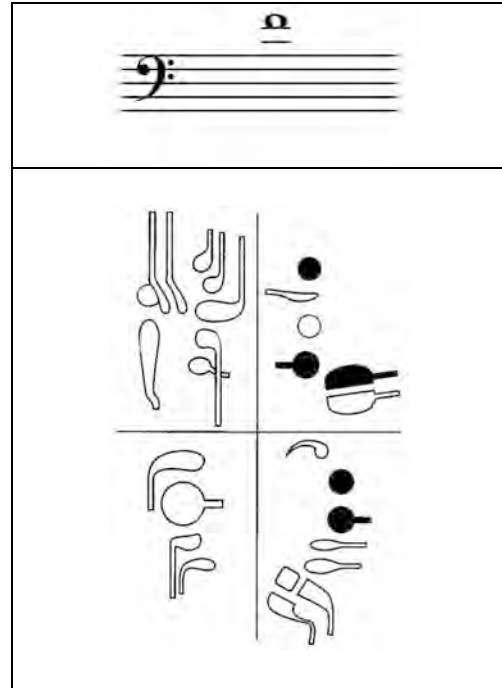
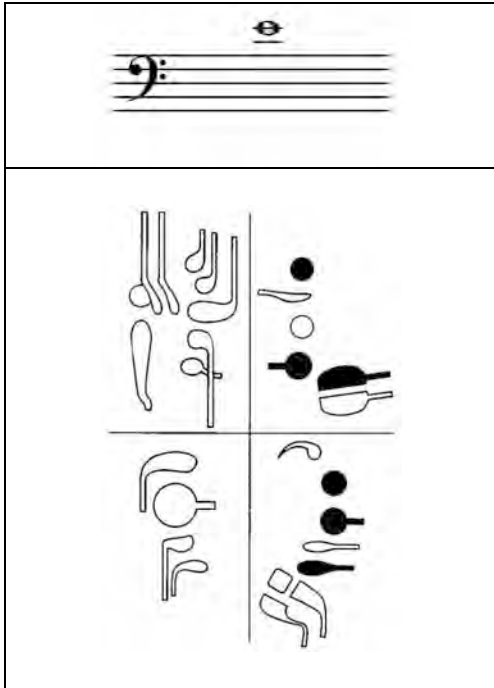
The Gliding Thumb

In order to avoid unclear beginnings of these notes, it is imperative to use the flick keys in the left-hand thumb. I suggest introducing the thumb as a standard part of these fingerings to ensure the students' success as they develop speed in their facility.

The image is contained within a rectangular border and is divided into two horizontal sections. The top section shows a bass clef on a five-line staff with two notes: C# (first space) and Db (second space). The bottom section is a 2x2 grid of diagrams illustrating various fingering techniques for the C#/Db note. The top-left diagram shows a hand with fingers 1, 2, and 3 positioned over the keys. The top-right diagram shows a hand with fingers 1, 2, and 3, with a black dot indicating a specific finger placement. The bottom-left diagram shows a hand with fingers 1, 2, and 3, with a black dot indicating a specific finger placement. The bottom-right diagram shows a hand with fingers 1, 2, and 3, with a black dot indicating a specific finger placement.

The Full C#/Db

The full C# / Db fingering helps this note respond in a way that is beautifully in tune and matches the surrounding notes. Although it may seem a bit complicated at first, I have found that students can adjust and integrate it into their playing.



The Beginning of the Upper Register

The use of the left-hand pinky is essential for good sound and pitch in the tenor register E and F on the bassoon. Starting the habit of adding the pinky on E and F will make it easier to learn the rest of the high register as the student matures. The left-hand pinky is part of all bassoon high-note fingerings from the tenor range E to all the notes above.

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