



# Setting Beginning Priorities

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SPONSOR: TEXAS BANDMASTERS ASSOCIATION

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# Beginner Priorities

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### RECRUITING

- Class Presentation
- Performances at Elementary Schools
- Holiday Ensembles in hallways before school
- Recorder performance with band accompaniment
- Performing at elementary festivals or other community events
- Educating the Public – Important since band is not a part of many cultures
- Get student achievements published in local newspapers
- Post band and student accomplishments (region, solo & ensemble) at the elementary schools
- Community Bash

### INSTRUMENT SELECTION

- Parent Meeting to cover process - this assures all parents/students get the same information
- I would suggest that you assign instruments to your beginners in the May/June so class schedules can be set before the beginning of the school year. Your counselors will like you much better if you get this done early.
- Individual Student Interviews (15-20 minutes per student)
  - Have students fill out an information sheet with mailing address, contact information, grades in classes this year, instrument choices in order of preference.
  - Having the students' grades will give you an idea about their work habits, responsibility, ability to learn, etc. At one time I asked them to bring a copy of their report card and also had the music teachers make "confidential" comments on the students from their school. All of this information can help you with instrument selection.
  - During the student interviews have the students try to produce a sound on the mouthpiece and the usually on the instrument. This sometimes helps to steer students toward the correct instrument and also gives you a chance to control instrumentation.
  - For percussion we stress piano background and also have them do some rather difficult hand coordination exercises.
    1. Hands on knees - RLRLR, then LRLRL, then RLRLR-rest-LRLRL
    2. Hands on knees - RLRLR, then LRLRL, then RLRLR-rest-LRLRL
    3. Two hand taps per foot tap- then switch where the starting hand is opposite (R or L) of the foot
    4. Three hand taps per foot tap - have them start the sequence with both R and L hand
    5. Four hand taps per foot tap - have them start the sequence with both R and L hand
    6. Two beats of each subdivision and directly into the next without a rest
      - two beats of 2 per foot tap, two beats of 3 per foot tap, two beats of 4 per foot tap, two beats of 3 per foot tap, two beats of 2 per foot tap
  - For brass instruments (especially French Horn), check students ability to match pitch by humming or singing pitch after you play it on a piano.
  - Consider second interviews for popular instruments (saxophone and percussion).  
You need to make sure you get quality students on sax and percussion.

### CONTROLLING QUALITY OF INSTRUMENTS

- Provide parents with a list of recommended brands/models
- Ask them to let you check all instruments not purchased at the music store (from individuals, pawn shops, etc.) so you can give them an idea of repairs that might be needed. They need to understand that an instrument obtained in this manner might need extensive repair.
- Provide parents with a list of supplies, books, ligatures, reeds, maintenance supplies, etc. that the students will need.
- Have the music store deliver the instruments directly to school if possible. This will prevent students from trying to play the instrument during the summer (developing bad habits) or possibly damaging it. If the instrument is at home I stress to the parents the importance of the student not even opening the case.

## BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

- Parent Orientation to discuss expectations, procedures, calendar, grading, etc.
- Take a class period to discuss procedures, guidelines and expectations, grading, etc. with the students
- Teach basic music reading skills (music staff, musical alphabet, note values – relate to fractions)
- Including these preliminary topics at the beginning of the year also allows you to interview any new students or students you didn't see in the spring. This also allows one director to work with the class while the other director(s) deal with all the paperwork at the beginning of the year.
- This is a good time to introduce your counting system by counting and clapping basic whole, half and quarter note rhythms.
- I wouldn't suggest teaching items such as time signature and key signature until later in the year when they students are actually using them

**STARTING WITH THE INSTRUMENTS** - I feel it is best for the woodwinds to start with hand position and then tone production second. It seems to work best for the brass to do tone production first and then hand position

### Body Posture

- Heels under the knee (makes foot tap comfortable)
  - Should be able to stand up and sit without moving the feet
- Sit on the front of the chair (feet need to be flat on the floor)
- Upper body as if you were standing
  - Shoulders centered over the hips and slight sloping - roll shoulders forward, up, back and then down
  - Head floats on shoulders and is level
  - Push center of back in slightly toward stomach to make the body tall
  - Body should feel balanced and relaxed

### Woodwinds

- Start with Hand Position First – Take up mouthpieces and head joints so students can't try to play on the instrument. Put the mouthpiece/head joint in a Ziploc bag and label with their name.
- Teach them how to open the case correctly - on the floor and not in their lap. Be very detailed on how to assemble the instruments so they don't bend keys.
- Use mirrors on the stands so they can see their hand position.

**Flute** - Must first teach them how to put the body of the flute and foot joint together. Be specific on how to hold so they don't bend keys.

Right Hand - Start by having them hold the flute vertically with their left hand at the top of the flute and the foot joint resting on the left knee.

- Right hand is a flat C
- Place the fingers first then thumb – fingers are flat and centered
- Thumb placement
  1. thumbnail parallel to wall (keeps fingers from rolling onto the side of the finger)
  2. top of the tip of thumb touches the flute at 3-4 o'clock
  3. thumb touches flute between fingers 4 & 5
- Move fingers from the large knuckles keeping the shape of the fingers – Stress keeping the fingers low and moving them straight up and down from the tone holes.

Right Hand Finger Exercises – Hold as described above - Right hand in correct hand position

- Start with all fingers down and move 4 alone, 5 alone, 6 alone, move pinky alone
- Finger Exercise #1 - Start with all fingers down
  1. 6 , 6
  2. 6 , 5 , 5 , 6
  3. 6 , 5 , 4 , 4 , 5 , 6
- Finger Exercise #2 - Start with all fingers up, except P↓
  1. 4 , 4
  2. 4 , 5 , 5 , 4
  3. 4 , 5 , 6 , 6 , 5 , 4

Left Hand - Grab the flute with the right hand above foot joint, but not using hand position. Put the flute on the left knee (vertically).

- Two ways to set left hand position
  1. Place fingers on keys and then raise wrist until side of 1<sup>st</sup> finger (fleshy part of finger between 2<sup>nd</sup> joint and knuckle) touches the side of the flute. Add thumb last on Bb key so they don't hold the flute with the left hand.
  2. Make a gun with the left hand. The side of the 1<sup>st</sup> finger (fleshy part of finger between 2<sup>nd</sup> joint and knuckle) should touch the flute at the top pad. Then fold the first finger down to the hole. Fold out the other fingers and keep top of 1<sup>st</sup> finger parallel to the floor. Add thumb last on Bb key so they don't hold the flute with the left hand.
- Fingers flat and center – it is okay if the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger can't reach the center of the key
- Stress keeping fingers low, moving from the large knuckles (except finger 1 moves from the 2nd joint) and moving straight up and down from the holes.

Left Hand Finger Exercises – Hold the flute as described above - Left hand in correct hand position.

- Start with all fingers down and move pinky alone, 3 alone, 2 alone, 1 alone, thumb alone
- Finger Exercise #3 - Start with all fingers down
  1. Pinky (P) , P
  2. P , 3 , 3 , P
  3. P , 3 , 2 , 2 , 3 , P
  4. P , 3 , 2 , Thumb(T) , T , 2 , 3 P
- Finger Exercise #4 - Start with all fingers up, except finger 1 down
  1. T , T
  2. T , 2 , 2 , T
  3. T , 2 , 3 , 3 , 2 , T
  4. T , 2 , 3 , P , P , 3 , 2 , T

Finger Exercises Using Both Hands - Put both hand on the flute in correct hand position and rest the foot joint on the left knee.

- Finger Exercise #5 - Start with all fingers down, except left pinky
  1. 6 , 6
  2. 6 , 5 , 5 , 6
  3. 6 , 5 , 4 , 4 , 5 , 6
  4. 6 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6
  5. 6 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 2 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6
  6. 6 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 2 , T , T , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6
- Finger Exercise #6 - Start with all fingers up except 1 and right pinky down
  1. T , T
  2. T , 2 , 2 , T
  3. T , 2 , 3 , 3 , 2 , T
  4. T , 2 , 3 , 4 , 4 , 3 , 2 , T
  5. T , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 2 , T
  6. T , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 6 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 2 , T

**Clarinet** - Must first teach how to put upper joint, lower joint and bell together. Be very specific about how to assemble the instrument to avoid bending keys. Use mirrors on the stands so students can see their hand position.

Right Hand – Put the bell on the knee and hold at top of upper joint with left hand.

- Fingers first then thumb (pinky on the C key) –
- Fingers flat and centered - tab of fingers in middle of hole
- Slight slope to the fingers - side of finger 4 should be near the side Eb key

- Thumb rest between thumbnail and first joint - thumbnail 45 degree (toward the chin) so that fingers can lay flat and don't roll on the side
- Move from the large knuckles, stress keeping the fingers low and moving straight up and down from the holes.

Right Hand Finger Exercises – Hold as described above - Right hand in correct hand position.

- Start with all fingers down and move 4 alone, 5 alone, 6 alone, pinky alone
- Finger Exercise #1 - Start with all fingers down
  1. Pinky(P) , P
  2. P , 6 , 6 , P
  3. P , 6 , 5 , 5 , 6 , P
  4. P , 6 , 5 , 4 , 4 , 5 , 6 , P
- Finger Exercise #2 - Start with all fingers up
  1. 4 , 4
  2. 4 , 5 , 5 , 4
  3. 4 , 5 , 6 , 6 , 5 , 4
  4. 4 , 5 , 6 , P , P , 6 , 5 , 4

Left Hand - Hold under the thumb rest with the right hand - not in hand position

- Fingers first then thumb
- First finger is the key to the left hand position
  - Form a gun with the left hand
    - cover the first hole with the first finger
    - raise the wrist until the 1<sup>st</sup> joint touch the A key
    - roll the wrist back toward your body until the 2<sup>nd</sup> joint touches the G# key (should now see the back of the left hand)
- Then fold the other fingers out and let them cover the other holes - all slant downward at a 45 degree angle - put the pinky on the B key.
- Thumb goes across the hole at a 45 degree angle
  - Teach 3 positions of the thumb
    - hole only
    - hole and register key
    - register key only (break at first joint to roll up to the register key)

Left Hand Finger Exercises – Hold as described above - Right hand in correct hand position.

- Start with all fingers down and move pinky alone, 3 alone, 2 alone, one alone, thumb alone
- Finger Exercise #3 - Start with all fingers down
  1. Pinky (P) , P
  2. P , 3 , 3 , P
  3. P , 3 , 2 , 2 , 3 , P
  4. P , 3 , 2 , 1 , 1 , 2 , 3 , P
- Finger Exercise #4 - Start with all fingers up, except thumb down
  1. 1 , 1
  2. 1 , 2 , 2 , 1
  3. 1 , 2 , 3 , 3 , 2 , 1
  4. 1 , 2 , 3 , P , P , 3 , 2 , 1

Finger Exercises Using Both Hands - Put both hands on the clarinet in correct hand position and rest the bell on the knee.

- Finger Exercise #5 - Start with all fingers down, except left pinky
  1. P , P
  2. P , 6 , 6 , P
  3. P , 6 , 5 , 5 , 6 , P

4. P , 6 , 5 , 4 , 4 , 5 , 6 , P
  5. P , 6 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 5 , P
  6. P , 6 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 2 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , P (can't lift 1 because clarinet would move)
- Finger Exercise #6 - Start with all fingers up except T and 1 down
    1. 2 , 2
    2. 2 , 3 , 3 , 2
    3. 2 , 3 , 4 , 4 , 3 , 2
    4. 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 2
    5. 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 6 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 2
    6. 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , P , P , 6 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 2

**Saxophone** - Must first teach how to put on neck strap and connect it to the instrument.

**Right hand** - Hold at top of upper joint with the left hand and let the sax hang to the side of the right leg.

- Fingers first then thumb - put pinky on the C key
- Fingers flat and centered - tab of fingers in middle of pearls
- Put thumb under the thumbrest and push the sax forward to the thigh - just before the knee (this will help with the students anchor the mouthpiece). Students with small hands may need to place the thumb on the right side of the thumb rest.
- Move from the large knuckles, stress keeping the fingers low (staying on the pearls) and moving straight up and down.

**Right Hand Finger Exercises** – Hold sax in playing position with both hands in correct playing position.

- Start with all fingers down and move 4 alone, 5 alone, 6 alone, pinky alone
- Finger Exercise #1 - Start with all fingers down
  1. Pinky(P) , P
  2. P , 6 , 6 , P
  3. P , 6 , 5 , 5 , 6 , P
  4. P , 6 , 5 , 4 , 4 , 5 , 6 , P
- Finger Exercise #2 - Start with all fingers in the right hand up
  1. 4 , 4
  2. 4 , 5 , 5 , 4
  3. 4 , 5 , 6 , 6 , 5 , 4
  4. 4 , 5 , 6 , P , P , 6 , 5 , 4

**Left Hand** - Use correct right hand position to hold the sax

- Fingers first then thumb
- Center the fingers on the pearls and then raise the wrist until the top of the first finger is the same height as the top of the 2<sup>nd</sup> palm key.
- Pinky on the G# key
- Thumb goes across the pearl at a 45 degree angle with the hard part of the thumb (at the 1<sup>st</sup> joint) on the pearl. The thumb then rocks to the tip to push the octave key. Avoid students lifting the finger to hit the octave key.

**Left Hand Finger Exercises** - Sax in playing position with both hands in correct playing position.

- Start with all fingers down and move pinky alone, 3 alone, 2 alone, one alone (Fingers Alone). Can also work on flipping fingers 1 & 2 (B to C)
- Finger Exercise #3 - Start with all fingers down in the left hand and right hand can stay down to stabilize the saxophone
  1. Pinky (P) , P
  2. P , 3 , 3 , P
  3. P , 3 , 2 , 2 , 3 , P
  4. P , 3 , 2 , flip to 2, flip to 1, 2 , 3 P

- Finger Exercise #4 - Start with all fingers up, except 2 down and right hand can stay down to stabilize the saxophone
  1. Flip to 1, Flip to 2
  2. Flip to 1, 2 , 2 , Flip to 2
  3. Flip to 1, 2 , 3 , 3 , 2 , Flip to 2
  4. Flip to 1, 2 , 3 , P , P , 3 , 2 , Flip to 2

Finger Exercises Using Both Hands - Put both hands on the saxophone in correct hand position.

- Finger Exercise #5 - Start with all fingers down except left pinky
  1. P , P
  2. P , 6 , 6 , P
  3. P , 6 , 5 , 5 , 6 , P
  4. P , 6 , 5 , 4 , 4 , 5 , 6 , P
  5. P , 6 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 5 , P
  6. P , 6 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 2 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , P
  7. P , 6 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 2 , Flip to 2, Flip to 1, 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , P
- Finger Exercise #6 - Start with all fingers up except 2 down.
  1. Flip to 1, Flip to 2
  2. Flip to 1, 2 , 2 , Flip to 2
  3. Flip to 1, 2 , 3 , 3 , 2 , Flip to 2
  4. Flip to 1, 2 , 3 , 4 , 4 , 3 , 2 , Flip to 2
  5. Flip to 1, 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 2 , Flip to 2
  6. Flip to 1, 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 6 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 2 , Flip to 2
  7. Flip to 1, 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , P , P , 6 , 5 , 4 , 3 , 2 , Flip to 2

## EMBOUCHURE AND TONE PRODUCTION

### Sound on the Mouthpiece and Headjoint

- Discuss breathing - Calm in and calm out - Face stays the same as you breath and exhale.
- Have students practice breathing and exhaling while watching their face in a mirror. Discuss what they should see - Lips, cheeks, corners of mouth, teeth opening, aperture
- Spend a couple of days working on correct shape of face before adding the mouthpiece or head joint. Students are still working on finger exercises during this time.
- Be very detailed on how to put on the ligature, reeds and how to hold the head joint.
  1. Reed - Flat to Flat, Thick to Thick, Thin to Thin
  2. Ligature - Has a big and little end (look through like eyeglasses). Mouthpiece also has a big and little end, so make sure you match big to big/little to little on ligature and mouthpiece.
  3. Put ligature on the mouthpiece first. Then lift the ligature and slide the reed under the ligature. If the reed is put on the mouthpiece first, students may chip the reed while putting on the ligature.
  4. Screws of ligature always on the right side of the mouthpiece.
  5. Hold Mp/Barrel/Neck in left hand and use the right hand to put ligature on Mp. Practice raising and lowering the ligature with the thumb and 2<sup>nd</sup> finger of the left hand.
  6. Raise ligature with the left thumb and 2<sup>nd</sup> finger, pick up reed with RH and slide under ligature. Let ligature slide back down
  7. Use 1<sup>st</sup> finger of LH and thumb of RH to line up the reed (left to right) on the Mp. Use the left thumb of the RH to raise and lower the reed as needed. Never touch the tip of the reed.
  8. When reed is lined up correctly, pull ligature down snugly. If using a metal ligature, tighten the screws snugly, but not too tight. I use the Gigliotti ligature for clarinet, because once you set the screws you can just pull it up and down and don't need to tighten or loosen the screws.
- When you think they are ready to try producing a sound on the mouthpiece/head joint, make sure you place the mouthpiece/head joint for the first few days. I take the mouthpieces/headjoints up

daily and don't let the students take them home until they can place the mouthpiece/headjoint consistently and successfully in class.

- Whatever sound comes out during the first attempts is fine even if they don't get any sound. You need to make them feel comfortable with whatever happens because tension and disappointment will only make them less successful.
- At this point I would not suggest teaching use of the tongue to start notes. You can discuss vowel sound so they are using the correct vowel sound from the initial sounds. We don't add the tongue for several weeks.
- Discuss instant sound, steady sound and natural ending so they become aware of the ultimate goal. Once they can do this then you can start with tone production on the entire instrument.
  - Instant Sound - No pause, air or extraneous noises
  - Steady, Constant Sound - demonstrate correct and incorrect
  - Natural Ending - Explain by demonstrating how sound ends when singing or talking. Just stop blowing - make sure tongue doesn't move or stop the note.

### **Clarinet and Saxophone**

- I suggest using LaVoz reeds for the first semester. Most reeds in the box play will play and you aren't having to figure out if it is the reed or the student causing a problem Use medium or medium hard reeds (depends on the mouthpiece) for clarinet and medium reeds for saxophone.
- I currently use the Ridenour RE-5 mouthpiece and LaVoz medium hard reeds on clarinet and the Vandoren AL3 Alto Saxophone mouthpiece with medium reeds. Use medium LaVoz reeds with the 5RV lyre clarinet mouthpiece or C star saxophone mouthpiece.
- The best way to get the correct embouchure on clarinet is to have the students shape the face as if they are trying to drink a thick milkshake through a straw. The chin should be very flat (sculpted) and the corners toward the center and anchored to the teeth. Once they get the shape of the face correct have them keep the same face and blow out. On saxophone, have the student say "ooo". Don't let them get the face too tense and sculpted on saxophone.
- Teach the students to open and close the jaw without changing the embouchure. Try to get the jaw open the correct amount before inserting the mouthpiece. It is best if students don't have to close the jaw to get the teeth to the top of mouthpiece. This will prevent biting.
- On clarinet, hold the barrel with the thumb and two fingers to establish the correct angle. On saxophone, have them hold the neck with the thumb and two fingers (almost parallel to the floor).
- How much mouthpiece inside the mouth? Take in enough so the reed vibrates freely. When the sound starts to spread or squeaks occur, you know they have too much mouthpiece in their mouth.
- Make sure the head is level (eyes looking across the room and not down). Form the face first and then slide the mouthpiece in on the bottom lip until the top of the mouthpiece hits the top teeth. The bottom lip should not be over the teeth prior to inserting the mouthpiece (should be able to talk while forming the embouchure). The back part of the lip should fold over the bottom teeth (like a sheet over a mattress) as the reed slides in on the bottom lip. You can have the student put their first finger on their lip (like the reed) and push into the bottom teeth slightly to see how the lip folds over. I actually do this with my finger when I can't get a student to understand this.
- You need to make sure the students understand that the top of the mouthpiece must be anchored to the top teeth and that there will be some pressure into the top teeth.
- The cheeks shouldn't puff on clarinet and if the corners are anchored to the teeth air can't get into the cheeks. The cheeks puffing slightly on saxophone is fine and will actually help them produce that "darker, velvety saxophone sound"
- Try to get clarinets to produce a F# on the mouthpiece and barrel (okay if it is a sharp F# or very flat G). On saxophone I don't worry about a pitch on the mouthpiece/neck at first because I don't want the mouthpiece on the cork too far. I just listen for an open tone quality and very free vibrations.
- Make sure that you teach the vowel sound at the initial stages of tone production.  
Clarinet - "eee", Saxophone - "ah" or "oo" (I prefer "oo")
- Main issues I see when I work with clarinets/saxes are:
  1. Too much lip over the bottom teeth - too much lip touch the reed and it can't vibrate freely
  2. Not anchoring to the top teeth
  3. Using reeds that are too hard. If the sound is airy or harsh, the reed may be too hard.
  4. Trying to use a clarinet embouchure on saxophone.



## **Flute**

- Hold the head joint in both hands with a thumb and two fingers in each hand with the palms facing away from the body to avoid putting too much pressure against the lip.
- Make sure the students keep their head level. I tell them they need to play the flute with the look of pride and confidence.
- The head joint should be parallel to the lip line and also in the same plane as the face. Have the students use a mirror on the stand to check this.
- Set the bottom edge of the tone hole on the lip line. This has to be adjusted depending on the fullness of the student's bottom lip. The bottom lip should cover between 1/3-1/2 of the tone hole.
- The lips should move forward as if saying "pooh", but never completely finish pronouncing the word. Let the air make an opening in the center of the lips and practice this in the mirror without the head joint at first. You can also use a cocktail straw to help with the aperture and then pull the straw out while they are blowing.
- It is okay for the lips to blow away from the teeth slightly and for the cheeks to puff slightly. A relaxed and slightly puffy face will keep the students from playing sharp in the upper register later. I teach the students to pout a little when they play with small air pockets between the lips and teeth.
- Make sure the corners do not pull back toward the ears or up. It is okay if the corners go down slightly as if frowning.

## **Sound on the Entire Instrument**

- Each day start with the mouthpiece/head joint and then move to the entire instrument
- YOU place the instrument the first few times and then let them try it by themselves

## **Clarinet**

- Hold the instrument with the right hand in correct hand position with the fingers down. Hold the barrel with the thumb and two fingers of the left hand.
- The first note should be a G with the right hand down.
- As they become comfortable and consistent in producing the G in this manner, have them start the note and then take the left hand off of the barrel. Next start the note and take the left hand off of the barrel, and then lift the fingers in the right hand. This teaches them to learn how to pull up into the top teeth with the right thumb.
- A good way to see whether they are anchoring to the top teeth is to slightly pull up on the bottom rod (just above the bell) to add pressure to the top teeth and then let go after a couple of seconds. If the clarinet drops out of their mouth or the sound changes, they aren't anchoring enough.
- Once they are comfortable with stabilizing the clarinet into the top teeth by pulling up the thumb without any other fingers, have them start playing T1, T12, & T123
- Once they are successful with these notes, then start adding fingers 4, 5 & 6 to the left hand.
- All of this is done by telling them what fingers to put down and not discussing note names or reading music yet. In my opinion, reading music at this point is too much information for the students to remember. Let them focus on hand position, embouchure and tone production.

## **Saxophone**

- You will need to adjust the neckstrap, neck and mouthpiece so their head is level and not tilted. You will need to check this daily until they understand how to do it themselves.
- Close all fingers to insert the mouthpiece into the mouth.
- They should push forward with the right thumb until the bell rests on the thigh just behind the knee. This helps the students anchor the top of the mouthpiece into the top teeth.
- Start by playing B, A or G (all fine). If you start on B or A, quickly have them try starting on a G because if it skips to the upper octave at the beginning of the note, you know their face is too tight.
- Go ahead and have the students play down to the low D fairly soon, because this will also let you know if they are using too much vertical pressure with their jaw or anchoring too much.
- Don't bother with letter names or reading music at this time. Use numbers for the fingers you want them to put down.

## **Flute**

- Have students sit at a 45 degree angle across the right corner of the chair. To get the flute parallel to the front edge of the chair, the shoulders rotate about 22.5 degrees back to the front and then the head finishes the remainder of the 45 degrees until the flute is parallel to the front edge of the chair.
- Start with the flute on the left knee (vertical) with both hands in correct hand position. Then pull the bottom of the flute straight out away from the body until the flute is parallel to the floor and the head joint is resting over the left shoulder.
- Keeping the flute horizontal pull the foot joint (right hand) back toward your body until the flute is parallel to the front of the chair. The flute is still resting on your left shoulder and under the chin.
- Once the student is comfortable with the above movements, have them lift the flute until the head joint is on the bottom lip. You will need to help them place the head joint in the correct place and use a mirror where they can also see. I have the students slightly tilt the head to the right so the flute doesn't have to be parallel to the floor to be parallel to the lip line (creates less tension).
- Discuss how the flute is suspended and not held. Explain that there are four suspension points. 1) head joint on lip, 2) side of 1<sup>st</sup> finger in the left hand, 3) right thumb and 4) right pinky. Have the students put the flute in playing position with all the fingers down and then lift them until they are able to stabilize the flute using only the four suspension points.
- Once the students can suspend the flute, have them finger T12 and try playing an A. I have the students play in the upper octave first and I have had more success with this than starting on the low notes. Students seem to be able to make the aperture larger more easily than they are able to learn to make it smaller.
- Once they are comfortable and consistent in producing the A, have them add or lift one finger at a time to work on T1 (Bb) and T123 (G). The just expand up and down when they are ready.

## **OTHER WOODWIND GOALS DURING THE FIRST YEAR**

### **Flute**

1. High/Low on the head joint
  - Teach by having the students blow air on the palm of their hand and raise and lower the air by moving the bottom lip forward and back
  - Then have them do this on the head joint. Start on the low note and raise the airstream to produce the high note. It also helps if they slightly pull the corners to the center and let the cheeks puff slightly.
  - Be careful that the students don't get the high note out by just blowing harder. Tell them you don't want the high note to be much louder than the low note.
2. Octave Slurs
  - Have the students practice high/low on the head joint and then go directly to the flute.
  - An "A" is a good note to use for octave slurs. Once the students can control the octave slur on A, then gradually expand it up and down one note at a time. Octave slurs will work on E through C# (fingering must be the same for both octaves).
  - Watch the bottom lip and make sure it is moving to change the direction of the airstream. Don't let the students just blow harder, which will also make the higher note louder.
  - Even at the initial stages of learning octave slurs, it doesn't hurt to use a tuner to make sure they are blowing the airstream in the correct location for that note. If the note is sharp then have them lower the airstream and if the note is flat have them raise the airstream.
3. Vibrato
  - I don't usually teach this until the second semester and often near the end of the year.
  - Have the students say/sing a long note and then add "uhs" into the sound with an extra push with the breath. Work for a continuous sound that doesn't start and stop with each "uh".
  - Next have them blow air through the lip aperture and try to create the air pulses.
  - Then have them try it on the head joint. I will sometime push in on their stomach to let them hear the amount of change we want in the sound. Make sure the students understand that they actually push out with their stomach muscles to produce the pulses.
  - At the initial stages of learning vibrato I want the pulses exaggerated. When they go to the entire flute, the change in the sound will not be as much as on the head joint.

- I try to get flutes to make the vibrato a combination of steady air and then faster than steady air. I feel that if they let the pulses go faster and slower than steady air, the pitch variation will be more than you want.
  - Teach pulsing quarter notes at about 70-80 first, then attempt 8<sup>th</sup> notes at about 60. Eventually add triplets and 16ths, but not until the slower pulses are comfortable. Vibrato must first be taught as subdivisions of the beat and then later they will learn to make the pulses free and not a subdivision of the beat.
4. Chromatic Bb - I believe it is best to teach thumb Bb first since flutes will play mostly in flat keys. I typically don't teach 1-4 Bb until we start learning the chromatic scale.
  5. By the end of the year, flutes should be able to play from low C or B up to at least high Ab. I sometimes teach the Bb scale two octaves, but it just depends on the individual class and how they are progressing.
  6. Scales - We teach Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, F, C, G and chromatic scales in the beginning year. All of these are two octaves, except sometimes I only get one octave on Bb.

### **Clarinet**

1. Register Key - Teach how to use the register key by playing a lower note and then YOU (not the student) add the register key. I suggest that you start by using low C, which skips to high G when the register key is added. Then add fingers in the right hand one at a time. If the mouthpiece isn't anchored to the top teeth or the vowel sound isn't correct (ee), the upper note will be spread or flat.
2. Rolling to the A key - This is probably the most important finger in learning to play the clarinet. This finger should rock back and forth (like a windshield wiper) while moving from the knuckles. Students MUST roll up and hit the A key with the side of the first finger on the 1<sup>st</sup> joint. Have them slur from 1<sup>st</sup> finger F# to A and there shouldn't be a G between the two notes. You can also finger T-1-2-3-P in the left hand and then roll the 1<sup>st</sup> finger off of the hole and up to the A key. This will produce a sound much like an "old timey" ambulance siren. This is not a real note, but it teaches the students to roll the 1<sup>st</sup> finger while keeping the left hand fingers in the correct hand position. Being able to do this correctly is vital to being able to play across the break smoothly.
3. Pinkies - Make sure you teach both fingerings (right and left) for playing C, C# and B (F, F#, E) with the pinkies.
4. Chromatic Fingerings
  - F# - first finger and thumb + bottom 2 side keys
  - B natural (high F#) - middle finger and 4 + ring key
  - Eb - I usually only teach T12 + bottom side key. Can also teach T12 and ring key, but I don't feel it is absolutely necessary.
5. By the end of the year, clarinets should be able to play from low E up to high E.
6. Scales - We teach Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, F, C, G and chromatic scales in the beginning year. All of these scales are taught two octaves. I don't really feel it is important for middle school age students to be able to play any of the scales three octaves.

### **Saxophone**

1. Palm Keys - Try to keep the correct left hand shape as much as possible when hitting the palm keys.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> palm key is hit by collapsing the palm slightly
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> palm key is hit with the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> palm key is hit with the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger
2. Chromatic Fingerings and Bis
  - F# - middle finger and 4 + F# key with finger 6 in the RH
  - I teach Bb as 12 + bottom side at first, but I feel it is important that the students also learn the Bis fingering (hitting the B key and the key beneath it both with the first finger at the same time) before the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> year and become comfortable with using it.
3. Vibrato
  - I don't usually teach this until the second semester and often near the end of the year.
  - Start by having the students lightly chew on their finger.
  - Then have them try it on the mouthpiece/neck. On saxophone, the vibrato is created by letting the sound go below pitch and then back up. Be careful that it doesn't get too wide (too low).
  - Teach pulsing quarter notes at about 70-80 first, then attempt 8<sup>th</sup> notes at about 60. Eventually add triplets and 16ths, but not until the slower pulses are comfortable. Vibrato must first be

taught as subdivisions of the beat and then later they will learn to make the pulses free and not a subdivision of the beat.

4. By the end of the year, saxophones should be able to play from low Bb up to high F.
5. Scales - We teach Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, F, C, G and chromatic scales in the beginning year. All of these scales are taught two octaves, except Bb and C.

**BRASS-** Start with vibrating on the mouthpiece and teach hand position and fingerings later. Use the word “vibrate” instead of “buzz” when talking to the students. Vibrate makes it seem like it is something that just occurs, where buzz makes them think they have to do something for it to happen.

**TEACH BODY POSTURE** (see the information in the section on woodwinds)

## **EMBOUCHURE AND TONE PRODUCTION**

### **Sound on the Mouthpiece**

- Discuss breathing and YOU place the mouthpiece for a few days so they understand what it should feel like on their face.
- We start with “natural face” on the brass instruments. I usually ask the students if they can feel their teeth lightly touching the inside of the lip and tell them to just keep the lips lightly touching the teeth when they blow. Don’t let the lips blow away from the teeth and into the mouthpiece.
- While looking in a mirror, have them blow and let the air slightly open the center of the lips forming an aperture
  - Face shouldn’t change when they blow and lips must stay lightly against the teeth.
  - Corners should not pull back or up.
- Teach students to hold the mouthpiece with a thumb and two fingers on the shank of the mouthpiece
- Placement - Trumpet (center on lips,  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$ ), French Horn (bottom edge of mouthpiece sits on line of bottom lip), Trombone (can start with centered or  $\frac{1}{3}$  bottom and  $\frac{2}{3}$  top lip)
- Stress that mouthpiece rests on the bottom lip and just touches the top lip enough to seal. This is the time to make sure students don’t put pressure on the top lip. Make sure you discuss mouthpiece angle.
- If students only get air at first (no vibration) that is fine and probably best. I usually tell them that all we want is air so they don’t get disappointed if they don’t get vibrations.
- Then ask the students to speed up the air and the lips will probably start vibrating. If this doesn’t produce a vibration then tell them to gently close the center of the lips. I usually take their fingers and show them how the vibrations start when the lips touch lightly.
- Students need to make sure that the bottom lip doesn’t get wet from the top lip - lips are even.
- Make sure the bottom lip remains standing tall and doesn’t fold over the teeth or blow away from the teeth.
- At this point I would not suggest teaching use of the tongue to start notes and we generally don’t discuss tonguing for several weeks. You can discuss vowel sound so they are using the correct vowel sound from the initial sounds.
- The main goal is for students to be able to produce a steady and open vibration. Once students can do this consistently then they are ready to add the instrument. Go ahead and discuss instant sound, steady sound and natural ending (see woodwind section).

### **Sound on the Instrument** - First teach hand position

- Each day start on the mouthpiece first and then move to the instrument
- Again, you place the instrument the first few times and then let them try it by themselves
- Don’t be concerned about what note comes out as long as the sound is open and resonant. I would try to get the low brass to F quickly, because on low Bb they may be letting the lips blow into the mouthpiece and not setting the corners at all. Eventually try to get everyone on a Concert F (FH - Concert C).

## Other Brass Skills

- Siren on the Mouthpiece - Teach students to make a small “hill” siren by changing the direction of the air. For a higher pitch the students point the air down. Don’t give too much information or try to explain this too much. Just tell them that they point the air down with the top lip. Be careful that they don’t let the bottom lip tuck under the top lip when trying to change the direction of the air. As students become more comfortable with this skill, then you can get them to make a larger change in pitch with the siren.
- Lip Slurs - This should only be introduced once the students can make a steady and resonant tone quality on both notes of the lip slur (probably Concert F down to Concert Bb). At first have them start on the higher note (airstream pointed down) and slur down to the lower note (airstream straight). Discuss eliminating extraneous sounds between the two notes and learning to make the change happen at a specific time (2 or 4 beats on each note) without any break between the two notes. Once they can slur down, have them slur from the lower note up to the higher note (pointing airstream down). Make sure the tone quality on the upper note doesn’t sound pinched or less resonant. You can then have them try these slurs in other positions. It is probably best to not attempt 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> positions, because they are not going to be able to sound good on these notes at this time. As range develops you can teach slurs involving 3 notes.
- By the end of the year, brass should be able to play from low Concert E (some trombones may not be able to do this note if their arm is too short) up to high Concert D. Some will be able to go higher, but it is best to not extend range too quickly on brass because you can create bad habits. In my opinion, the director needs to decide what each individual student is capable of doing range-wise.
- Scales - We teach Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, F, C, G and chromatic scales in the beginning year. All students learn these one octave and some students may learn the Eb and F scales two octaves.

**ARTICULATION** - I feel it is best to wait until students can consistently produce a characteristic sound on several notes before you introduce articulation.

- When introducing articulation, have the students say the articulation syllable (de, dah, doe, te, tah, toe) without letting the jaw move. Tell them to see how and where the tongue touches.
- Then have them blow air through their embouchure (without any part of the instrument) and let the tongue move as if saying the articulation syllable.
  1. Tongue touches the same place with the same strength each time. Tongue should touch in the roof of the mouth at the teeth and gum line. Touch with one taste bud of the tongue.
  2. Listen to make sure the tongue isn’t staying up too long and stopping the airstream. Tongue should spend 99% of the time down.
  3. Listen to make sure there aren’t extraneous sounds caused by the tongue touching too hard or too much of the tongue being used.
  4. Stress that the tongue only interrupts the airstream and doesn’t stop it. Much like flicking your finger through a stream of water coming out of a faucet.
- Next have them put the mouthpiece in the mouth or on the lips (head joint in playing position) and say the articulation syllable. Instruments with the mouthpiece/reed in their mouth will have to figure out how and where the tongue should touch the reed.
  1. Clarinet - top of the tip of the tongue touches the side of the tip of the reed
  2. Saxophone - top of the tongue touches the side of the tip of the reed.
  3. Oboe/Bassoon - top of the tip of the tongue touches the reed blades from beneath the reed.
  4. I feel the tongue motion should be up and down (some teach back and forth successfully). With an up/down motion, the length of a students’ tongue will partly determine whether they touch with the tip of the tongue or a little back from the tip.
  5. Most saxes will be further back from the tip of the tongue since the mouthpiece is further inside the mouth; however, you must make sure that the tongue only touches the reed in a single place.
  6. It is very important that the tongue touches the side of the tip of the reed. If they touch directly into the top of the reed, it will likely squeak. If students touch the reed below the tip it may cause extraneous noises, a drop in the pitch or a lack of clarity.
- Then have the students blow air through the mouthpiece (across the head joint) without make a sound and articulate. Don’t discuss starting the air with the tongue at this time. Just have the students blow steady air for 2-4 beats and then start articulating half notes. Blowing air for a couple

of beats first helps to insure that students are using one airstream when articulating. Listen for how tongue is touching - can hear if they are using too much tongue or touching too hard.

One long airstream
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Air first then articulate				
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- The last step is to have the students make a sound on the mouthpiece/head joint and articulate. I would still have them start the sound for 2-4 beats and then start tonguing. Once they can do this fairly well they should be ready to articulate on the entire instrument, as well as faster note values. You can actually hear more about what they doing on just the mouthpiece, so I would suggest checking articulation on the mouthpiece/head joint several times each week for several weeks.

**MUSIC READING SKILLS** – While you are teaching hand position, embouchure and tone production, go ahead and teach music reading skills – clapping/counting, fingers in the air (show your brain), tap on shoulder, pulsing, syllables.

- Students must be taught and have a thorough understanding of a counting system. I would suggest that you only have the students count rhythms when they are first learning to read music (don't involve motor skills at first). Stress the importance of the students counting with energy and confidence. You can teach side to side matching skills by getting all students to count with the same energy. This skill can later transfer into playing in an ensemble.
- We teach pulsing subdivisions of the beat while counting. This really helps with rhythmic accuracy.
- Then add tap on shoulder or hand clapping to the counting. Tap on shoulder is often easier than clapping for the students.
- Add the foot tap when they seem comfortable with clapping and counting. Adding this too soon can be frustrating for the students because it is just too much for them to coordinate at the same time.
- Getting the students to count out loud is important, but it is vital that you later stress the importance of **COUNTING IN YOUR HEAD** when they start playing their instruments. I believe this is the key to students being able to play by reading music instead of “remembering what it sounds like”.
- Another good method for working on reading rhythms is “Fingers in the Air - Show Your Brain”. The students show the beats (1,2,3,4) with their fingers in the air and then count the rhythms. The fingers reinforce the downbeats and help them remember what beat in the measure they are currently counting.
- A great book for teaching rhythm is **WINNING RHYTHMS** by Arroya, which is published by Kjos Publications.

**BASIC PRIORITIES FOR BEGINNING BAND**

1. Producing a characteristic tone through proper embouchure development
2. Proper hand position and finger movement. Technique can be learned later.
3. Development of Basic Music Reading Skills
4. Development of good work habits
5. Development of good concentration skills

# Clarinet Finger Exercises

## 1 Descending Notes That Don't Touch

## 2 Descending Notes That Touch

## 3 Descending Two Count Notes That Touch

## 4 Ascending Notes That Don't Touch

# Clarinet Finger Exercises - page 2

## 5 Ascending Notes That Touch

## 6 Ascending Two Count Notes That Touch

## 7 Right Pinky

## 8 Both Pinkies

## CLARINET WARM-UP NO. 1

On Mouthpiece and Barrel - Make sure that there is instant sound and keep the airstream fast, constant and steady.



On Mouthpiece and Barrel - Make sure the air doesn't stop as you touch the tip of the reed with the top of the tip of the tongue.



On Mouthpiece and Barrel - Make sure the air is constant/steady and that the tongue touches the same place with the same strength each time.

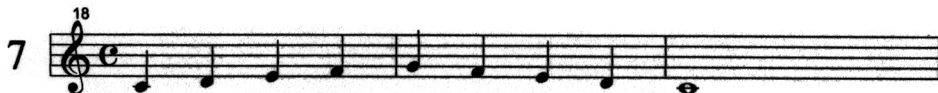


On Mouthpiece and Barrel - Use a fast, constant airstream and make sure it feels the same each time your tongue touches the ree..



## 5 Lines 1- 4 played on the instrument

1. Instant Sound    2. Fast, Constant, Steady Sound    3. Natural Ending to the Sound - Don't let the air slow down at the end of the note. Just stop blowing to stop the sound. Don't use the tongue to stop the sound.

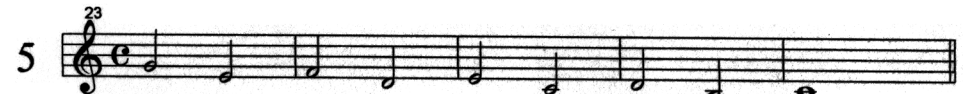


## CLARINET WARM-UP NO.2

Make sure the fingers hit the center of the hole and keep them close to the holes when you aren't using them.

Move the fingers quickly as you cover or uncover the holes and move the fingers straight up and down, not back and forth!

The right pinky should stay on the "F" key the entire time





# CLARINET WARM-UP NO. 3

Each group of 6 notes should be played with one constant airstream

Move the fingers quickly. When you move several fingers at the same time, they should hit or be picked up from the holes at the same time.

# CLAR W-UP 3 (P.2)

Make sure you are pulling up with the right thumb on this line.

Keep the right hand down while playing line #10 & #11. Keep the air fast and constant!!!

Pull Up With The Right Thumb

Roll the first finger. Hit the "A" key with the first joint of the first finger. Keep the left pinky touching the "B" key.

# Flute Finger Exercises

[Composer]

Musical score for Flute Finger Exercises, measures 1-67. The score consists of eight staves, each starting with a measure number. The notes are: Staff 1 (1): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 2 (12): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 3 (23): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 4 (34): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 5 (42): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 6 (50): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 7 (61): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 8 (67): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4.

# FLUTE WARM-UP NO. 3

Musical score for Flute Warm-up No. 3, measures 1-47. The score consists of seven staves, each starting with a measure number. The notes are: Staff 1 (1): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 2 (2): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 3 (15): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 4 (22): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 5 (29): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 6 (38): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 7 (43): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Staff 8 (47): G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4.

## Saxophone Finger Exercises

### Descending Notes That Don't Touch

1

### Descending Notes That Touch

2

### Descending Two Count Notes That Touch

3

### Ascending Notes That Don't Touch

4

## SAX WARM-UP NO. 3

Each group of 6 notes should be played with one constant airstream

1

2

3

4

5

6

Move the fingers quickly. When you move several fingers at the same time, they should hit or be picked up from the holes at the same time.

7

## FSMS BEGINNING BAND STUDENT INFORMATION

### Please print all information

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Grade in Fall 2010 (6, 7, or 8) \_\_\_\_\_ Current School (2009-2010) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Subdivision Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone (Father) \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone (Mother) \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

On the following scale, circle the area where the majority of your grades have been this school year:

100-----95-----90-----85-----80-----75-----70-----below 70

Have you made any D's or F's this school year? Yes No (circle one)

Have you received any U's or N's in conduct this year? Yes No (circle one)

Mark your first, second, and third instrument choices (1, 2, & 3) in the spaces provided below:

Flute \_\_\_\_\_

Clarinet \_\_\_\_\_

Trumpet \_\_\_\_\_

Trombone \_\_\_\_\_

<i>Limited Enrollment on these Instruments</i>	
Oboe _____	French Horn _____
Bassoon _____	Euphonium _____
Saxophone _____ A second interview may be required. See note below.	Tuba _____
	Percussion _____ Please experience recommended and a second interview may be required. See note below.

After meeting with a director tonight, if your final instrument choice is saxophone or percussion you will need to select a second instrument choice, which is not saxophone or percussion, and it may be necessary for you to have a second interview. If this second interview is needed, we will contact you by June 7<sup>th</sup>. Please do not make arrangements for an instrument until after the second interview.

Do not write below this line (to be filled in after you meet with a director)

Final Instrument Choice: \_\_\_\_\_ Director's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Instrument Choice (Perc/Sax only) \_\_\_\_\_

## **FORT SETTLEMENT MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND**

# **ALTO SAXOPHONE**

We suggest the: (preferred items are in bold print)

**Yamaha - Model YAS 23 with Vandoren AL3 mouthpiece**

Vito - Model 7131R with Vandoren AL3 mouthpiece

Jupiter - Model J2069 with Vandoren AL3 mouthpiece

All of the above saxophones should be supplied with a

**Vandoren Optimum - AL3 Mouthpiece**

### Required Materials:

Bonade Inverted Ligature

Double Reed Guard

Box of LaVoz Medium Alto Saxophone Reeds

"Pad Savers" are not recommended

Rhythm Master - Book 1 - Southern Music Company

Winning Rhythms - Kjos Publications

### Recommended Accessories:

Music Stand

Metronome/Tuner - Sabine MT9000

While students are required to have a musical instrument, they are not required to purchase one of the models listed above. However, each of these instruments has proven to be of good quality and durability for the beginning band student and can be suggested without reservation.

If you have an instrument or plan to purchase one other than from the suggested list, please contact one of the directors and let them check the quality and condition of the instrument before you make the purchase.